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*To explore
What lovelier forms in Nature's boundless store
The best too fit allied*

*Not from the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds on the ceiling of the Library of
the Royal Academy.*

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AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
REQUISITE CULTIVATION
AND
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
ARTS OF DESIGN
IN
ENGLAND.

BY
PRINCE HOARE.

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TO THE
EARL OF DARTMOUTH,
PRESIDENT,
AND TO THE
OTHER GOVERNORS
OF THE
BRITISH INSTITUTION
FOR PROMOTING
THE FINE ARTS
IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
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PREFACE.

THE interest at present so warmly taken in every thing that concerns the Arts of Design, and the comparatively slender methods hitherto adopted by this country to promote their progress, furnish cause to regret that they have not been made the subjects of more accurate inquiry. The nature and properties of those Arts, and their consequent public value, present a field unexplored by the researches of British erudition, and almost unnoticed amidst the extensive circle of British glory.

Painting has chiefly been considered by writers, as possessing the powers of imitating
b
merely

merely the external appearances of nature. Aristotle's authority has been brought to support this opinion, although without any due regard to the extensive sense in which he has used the term so frequently quoted.

In the present moment the idea of Painting is of a more enlarged description: "We ask," says the British Institution, "that professional talents be no longer confined to inferior objects, but that our Artists be encouraged to direct their attention to higher and nobler attainments; to paint the mind and passions of man; to depicture his sympathies and affections, and illustrate the great events which have been recorded in the history of the world." From the approbation and desire of these *higher and nobler attainments*, is evidently derived the general interest in the state of
the

the Arts, and the general readiness to concur in every project for their encouragement.

It is not my design, in this short treatise, to present to the reader a complete investigation of the faculties of Painting and Sculpture, but to offer to his perusal such remarks as my particular situation has enabled me to form. The Honorary Office which I hold in the Royal Academy, and the task in which I have there engaged, have led me to many reflections on the various degrees of exertion made by different States, in proportion to their respective powers, for the advancement of the Plastic Arts; and thence, forsaking the ungrateful office of comparison, I have been induced to examine abstractedly, how far, *in this particular point*, a full and adequate use has been made of the means and talents of my own country, for the discharge

b 2

charge of that most important of all trusts, the due cultivation of the strength and faculties of a nation.

Little apology will be requisite for an inquiry of this nature. In a State, by the spirit of which every individual appears to be called on, for the purposes of general utility, to acquaint himself more or less with the political nature of his age and country, as it is justly deemed an impertinence to meddle in extraneous subjects, so it can only be thought a due obligation to connect with each especial province of study, a knowledge of the rank and public interest which it is entitled to hold, and to endeavour to point out the peculiar means which it possesses of social advantage, or national aggrandizement.

It

It was easy for me to perceive that a discussion of such a subject might lead to the expression of sentiments very different from those at present subsisting in the minds of many of my countrymen, and even of some in the highest classes of rank and learning; but as various circumstances have contributed to bring within my reach a considerable degree of requisite information on the subject of the Arts, they have likewise conduced to make me regard an attempt of this kind as a task incumbent on me to perform; my apprehensions also above mentioned are naturally decreased, since the Proposal of the British Institution has been made public, and I indulge a hope that I shall often be found to speak the sentiments of an association so friendly to the Arts.

I have been desirous, in the following Inquiry, to take a view of the general powers and just purposes of the ARTS OF DESIGN; to consider their probable influence on the fame and morals of a people; and lastly, to examine in what degree of estimation they may be expected to rise in England, as well as to what uses they might, and ought, to be applied by a great, powerful, and honourably ambitious nation.

During the arrangement of these thoughts on paper, a work has been published which, at first view, seemed to supersede the present design, and to render any further efforts on the subject superfluous,—this is Mr. Shée's spirited and masterly performance of RHYMES ON ART. But, on further consideration, and after conversation with the
author

author of that work, there appears reason to believe that even a repetition of argument may be attended with beneficial consequences; and where, in some instances, I differ from the sentiments expressed by Mr. Shee, I have too high an opinion of his candour, to doubt that he will readily admit, and even approve of this public statement of such a difference.

Painting, it must be granted, is an art, the practice of which is better understood among the English Professors, than its essential faculties have hitherto been among other classes of society, however elegantly cultivated; a circumstance probably owing to the total exclusion of the Arts of Design from any share in the studies of our public education. The late Lord Kenyon, with an ingenuous frankness suited to his enlightened mind,

was heard to declare his conviction that the Arts possessed faculties, probably of a very high degree, with which his education had left him unacquainted. It is scarcely in the power of words to convey to an unprofessional reader any adequate idea of the occasional irrelevancy of classical ingenuity when exercising its strength in criticism on the Arts of Design. But this subject will be noticed in the course of the following chapters.

Mr. Shee, certainly, is in no danger of committing errors in this respect, but does he not yield to prejudices of a nature similar to those he blames, when he endeavours to draw a comparison between Poetry and Painting to the advantage of the latter? Is he not returning in kind the supposed injustice of writers? I am not inclined to think
the

the poets, who have given the preference to their own art, unjust, although I may not imagine them adequately informed on the subject of Painting, for the purpose of appreciating with justness its comparative merits. May it not, moreover, be conceived unnecessary, that the question of precedence should be settled between the two Arts, until there shall be no other argument of contest or emulation remaining to employ the powers of either? Let them first unite their forces and their charms to subdue the world to the interests of benevolence and peace, and it will be then time enough to contend which has had the greater part in so meritorious an achievement.

The reader will perhaps be surprised to observe, that I have classed the Fine Arts in a mode different from that which is usually

adopted by writers. I have considered the properties and effects of Painting as so exactly similar to those of Poetry, that the two Arts may justly be described to be *one* in essence, and only varying in mode. With *Painting* I unite *Sculpture*, and to *these* two united I give the definite appellation of the *Plastic Art*. I have not comprized under this title the sister Art of Architecture, although the derivation of the epithet might render it nearly as applicable to that branch of Design as to the two former; but I am inclined to give the name of the Plastic Art to Painting and Sculpture, in preference, because I think they acquire a value different and distinct from Architecture, by the power they possess, like Poetry, over the human passions; and it is in this last point that their intellectual dignity consists.

As

As to the term itself, *Plastic Art*, I have adopted it because, although strictly expressing *modelling* only, it has been rendered familiar to the public ear by modern use, as applicable both to Painting and Sculpture. I have wished in vain to find a simple term, which, denoting the *art of form*, rendered the *vehicle of intellectual expression*, might be conjointly applied to Painting and Sculpture. The *art of metrical language*, directed to similar purposes, has been more fortunate. Immemorial usage has distinctively confirmed to it the sacred name of Poetry, whereas in fact, the writer, the painter, and the sculptor, are all equally poets; the *mens divinator*, the *ποίησις*, belongs equally to all the three. Quinctilian's expression respecting Painting is well known: “ (Artium) aliæ in effectu
 “ (positæ), quæ operis, quod oculis sub-
 “ jicitur, consummatione finem accipiunt,

“ quam ποιητικὴν appellamus *qualis est pictura.*”

From this division of the three branches of Art, no intention, it is to be hoped, can be insinuated of depreciating the comparative estimation of Architecture. Architecture derives from the objects of its pursuit pretensions which are of a very different, and will, to many, appear of a higher kind than those of the former Arts: Architecture may justly claim a rank in civil progress with Agriculture; the essential direction of both is Utility, and, as they advance, they enter the provinces of beauty. But the essential aim of Painting and Sculpture is Beauty, and it is in their advance only that they enter the province of public utility. Architecture stands in these points completely contrasted with them. It marches,
however,

however, with equal pace in the formation of taste, as far as taste depends on symmetry, arrangement, or proportion of parts; but it ceases to accompany them when they enter the sphere of moral instruction. In this sphere Poetry, Painting, and Sculpture, visibly take their station together.

I desire, therefore, to be understood, that whenever I use the term *Plastic Art*, I mean especially the Arts of Painting and Sculpture in their highest provinces of history and poetic imagery. Under the names of the Arts, the Plastic Arts, and the *Arts of Design*, or form, I range Painting in all its branches, Sculpture, Architecture, and whatever else may be achieved by a knowledge of the principles of these three Arts. I have chiefly confined my observations to Painting and Sculpture, but I give to the
subject

subject of my inquiry the general term of the Arts of Design, because I conceive the national cultivation of every branch of them indispensably requisite to the completion of a nation's task.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, that
“ the value and rank of every Art is in pro-
“ portion to the mental labour employed in
“ it, or the mental pleasure produced by it.
“ As this principle,” he continues, “ is ob-
“ served or neglected, our profession be-
“ comes either a liberal art or a mechanical
“ trade. In the hands of one man it makes
“ the highest pretensions, as it is addressed
“ to the noblest faculties; in those of an-
“ other it is reduced to a mere matter of
“ ornament, and the painter has the humble
“ province of furnishing our apartments with
“ elegance.”

I have

I have not endeavoured to treat of all the numerous branches of Art, and of their varied beauties, or to describe its equally various powers of rendering itself delightful to the eye, both in form and colour; but I have wished to set it forth to view as an instrument of intellectual agency. I am aware that the *intellectuality* of Painting and Sculpture, although it form their highest essential character, does not constitute the whole of their Art; many parts relate to the mere imitation of form. But I regard the final excellence of the artist as depending on his ability to subdue the hand to the head, and to render Form subservient to the expression of the mind. It is from the exercise of such powers I have endeavoured to trace the moral, and consequently the civil, importance of the ARTS of DESIGN.

In

In examining their claims to national cultivation, having first stated the methods which might be conducive to their effectual advancement, and the measures which have been taken in England for that purpose, I have endeavoured to ascertain what expectations may justly be formed of English Genius in the Arts, and what degree of credit is to be given to the criticisms of foreign writers on this point; after which, as a test of the opinions that have been advanced, I have exhibited a general view of the state to which the Arts of Design have arrived in the circumstances of the present moment; omitting, however, in general, any mention of the names of living professors, for reasons sufficiently obvious.

In considering the requisite interference of Public Authority in support of the Arts, I
have

have not presumed to decide the *species* of reward which should be conferred on successful talents; I have merely stated that it should be certain. It might not, perhaps, have been improper to add, that whatever be the degree of reward, it should partake *not less* of honour than of wealth. Honour is the meed for which Genius thirsts; the renovating spring which excites it to fresh energies. Rewards, unconnected with honour, too frequently lead to the neglect of native talent; and unless honour add a stimulus to exertion, employment may make rich artists, but will never produce great ones.

Whatever may be the comparative merits of poets and painters, their fates have in this country been unequally subject to the influences of ignorance and caprice. Milton
com-

complained of neglect, and Reynolds met the flatteries of worldly attention. On the other hand, Addison, Pope, and Goldsmith, enjoyed the tribute of public admiration and respect during their lives; and in a still more recent period, the amiable Cowper has received the homage due to his talents and his virtues; while even the pecuniary remuneration due to the labours of Thornhill was contested (and their value measured by the yard); and while it is yet within the scope of remembrance, that Wilson, now so highly estimated, and whose works are now welcomed to all galleries, lived and died almost unknown beyond the circle of professional friendship.

To preclude from the annals of the future historian the records of deeper regrets, to
persuade

persuade by obvious exposition and gentle reasoning to the contemplation of a great national concern, and to attract by candid argument the attention of the wise, just, and enlightened powers of our nation; in a word, to express the united wishes of every votary of the Arts in England, will be found the endeavour of the following pages.

P. S. There is one further point in which I have omitted to consider fully the importance of the Arts to a Nation, namely, the commercial advantages which may be derived both from its highest and most subordinate branches, when under the influence of superior cultivation. I do not conceive myself qualified to render a satisfactory account of these advantages to the public; but, while I close my present task, I fix my eyes
with

with gratifying confidence on men whose zeal, information, and abilities, may effectually illustrate so interesting a topic.

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ERRATUM.

P. 251, last line but two, after the word transferred,
insert " from those Temples."

ON
NATIONAL CULTIVATION
OF THE
ARTS OF DESIGN.

PART I.

*On the Advantages arising from the
Cultivation of the Arts ;
And on the Methods most conducive to
their Advancement.*

CHAP. I.

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FINE ARTS TO THE FAME OF A NATION.

For know, by Nature's lib'ral hand design'd,
Man of no grov'ling or ungen'rous kind;
Athirst by excellence to win renown,
Honour his meed, and FAME his virtue's crown.

LONGIN. ANON. TRANSLAT.

THE acquisition of fame, by meritorious action, is the worthiest achievement of our nature. The pursuit of fame as a primary object, is indeed justly reprehended by moralists, because the desire of such an object cannot subsist, in a truly virtuous mind, singly and divested of every other motive; but fame, when it follows the energetic and successful prosecution of exalted

B 2

purposes,

purposes, is the richest and dearest tribute that can be received from mankind.

Fame, good or ill, is the inevitable guerdon of PUBLIC CONDUCT. The deeds of private men may shun, and escape, the light ; artifice may shelter insignificance, and be in return preserved by it from discovery ; but the actions of States cannot equally avoid the eye of observation : obscurity and concealment are not within their reach ; nor is it in the power of nations to veil, or gloss over, particular points of their history, and procure a partial sentence by evasion, or the imposing surface of a moment : the tremendous balance of fame is suspended over them, and will infallibly fix the most awful doom which humanity can receive on this side of the grave.

But, although none can control this mighty arm of judgment, we are all at liberty to investigate and weigh its verdict, to give or withhold our assent ; and the vote of every succeeding generation, nay, of every successive reflecting individual, tends to

to weaken or confirm the decree: in this manner fame becomes transitory or permanent.

To appreciate the character of nations, as of men, it is necessary to take into our consideration the whole of its component parts. We must observe whether a nation has exerted itself in arms, excelled in science, been superior in ingenious industry, or, finally, eminent in the last accomplishment of our civil state, the polished gifts of genius and taste. Again, of each of these attainments it is requisite to examine the source and motives, whether it has been pursued from the necessity of self-defence, or the desire of oppression; whether from the love of truth and utility, or of vanity and ostentatious parade; whether to diffuse comforts, or to heap the shrines of avarice and luxury; whether, finally, to inform, or to enslave, the understanding; to soften and polish, or to enervate and debase, the mind.

It sometimes happens, that one of these

attainments is possessed in so peculiar a degree by a single nation, as to form its characteristic feature. Thus we regard the Egyptians as learned and religious, the Persians as splendid and luxurious, the Carthaginians as sagacious and politic, &c. And of most of these it is true, that any one of them may be possessed in a singular and pre-eminent degree, without its conferring on the nation that possesses it any claim to general, uncontested pre-eminence of character and fame. We allow the Romans to have been brave, and eminent for public spirit; but we censure them for the want of those social and domestic refinements of sentiment, which constitute the most enviable pleasures and comforts of later civilization; and in this respect we consider them as our inferiors. Objections, in an equal or greater degree, are still more conspicuous in the general character of the other nations before-mentioned, as well as of many which might easily be added to the list. Thus it will be found that neither
valour,

valour, learning, pomp, or subtilty, neither extent of conquest, profundity of research, refinement of pleasure, or ingenuity of artifice, with other various achievements and attainments, can give a title to allowed superiority of fame.

But, after remarking the insufficiency of all these, it cannot but forcibly strike our observation, that (to whatever cause, physical or moral, the fact be owing) wherever the *Polite Arts* appear, and flourish in a surpassing degree, the happy native of that soil may, without fear of refutation, arrogate to his country the rare triumph of universal renown. Other perfections shed their lustre like single stars in the canopy of heaven; the influence of the arts alone unites their distant fires, and presents the glories of a constellation.

The throne of the arts (with some degree of exception in favour of Leo's golden reign) has hitherto been acknowledged, by the consent of the world, in one country only; and where, but in one country, has been ac-

known this decided superiority of *fame*? Envy itself scarcely knows how to level its shaft against the name of an ATHENIAN.

It has been elsewhere remarked, that it is the peculiar felicity of triumphs obtained in the province of the fine arts, that they serve rather to excite the affection than the jealousy of a rival ; and while they awaken competition, they conciliate approbation and applause. The fame handed down to us of the Athenian state, is that which presents itself to our reflection under the most grateful hues. When we combine in one idea their conspicuous examples of valour, of public spirit, and its attendant self-denial, with their knowledge equally profound and polite, their refined taste, and their unrivalled eminence in the fine arts, the assemblage cannot but form in our minds and hearts a national character, which it would be a prouder and more gratifying boast to surpass, than any other with which we are acquainted.

“ ATHENS,

“ATHENS, to succeeding ages the rule of taste,
and the standard of perfection.”

Dr. Young, on Original Composition.

“The Grecian commonwealths,” says the elegant author of *Hermes* (“while they maintained their liberty), were the most heroic confederacy that ever existed; they were the politest, the bravest, and the wisest of men : in the short space of little more than a century, they became such statesmen, warriors, orators, historians, physicians, poets, critics, painters, sculptors, architects, and philosophers, that one can hardly help considering that golden period as a providential event in honour of human nature, to shew to what perfection the species might ascend.”

Noble contention ! who should most excel
In government well pois'd, adjusted best
To public weal ; in countries cultur'd high ;
In ornamented towns, where order reigns,
Free social life, and polish'd manners fair ;
In exercise and arms ; arms only drawn
For common Greece, to quell the Persian pride ;
In moral science, and in graceful arts.

THOMSON'S LIBERTY.

Now, if the fame of the Greek states be thus pre-eminent, and if it must necessarily occur to every reader of history, that, of all the various parts of character enumerated in the passage from Hermes above-mentioned, the three which regard the plastic arts, are those alone wherein the Greeks have as yet found no equal competitor*, it appears just to conclude, either that those arts possess in themselves, exclusively, the privilege of conferring the laurel of fame, or that their influential effect on the nation that cultivates them, is that of rousing it to such superiority of effort, as equally to deserve the palm in all the various points of character. Either of these conclusions must sufficiently demonstrate the *importance of the arts to the fame of a nation.*

* O Greece ! thou sapient nurse of FINER ARTS,
Which to bright science blooming fancy bore,
Be this thy praise, that thou and thou alone
In these hast led the way, in these excell'd,
Crown'd with the laurel of assenting time !

THOMSON.

The

The philanthropic observer of mankind will readily open his bosom to admit the latter of these two conclusions; he has often sighed, in reflecting how few are the boasted and envied acquisitions of human talents, which have not been perverted to the lamentable purposes of dissention, strife, malignity, and mutual destruction! The statesman, the warrior, the orator, the critic, nay, with regret his recollection will add, the historian, the poet, the physician, and last, the philosopher, how have they sometimes *nobly* raged, to light the torch or spread the flame of devastation, to stir the spirit of inimical contest, or to point the shaft of jealousy, envy, and more than mortal calumny, at mankind! The cultivation of the arts alone is exempt from this accession of dangerous power. They alone unalterably and necessarily lead to the attainment of the highest, because the happiest, purposes of social intercourse. Beauty, physical and intellectual, the ornament and delight of our nature, is their perpetual

object. The temple of the *Graces*, of all that softens, all that endears, all that unites mankind, is the abode of the arts. They take their visible course over the surface of all the pleasing emotions of the mind ; their invisible one penetrates and pervades them. They have no existence but from those qualities of our nature, which sooth, which delight, which enrapture.

Theirs are the lessons, and the plans of peace,
To live like brothers, and, conjunctive all,
Embellish life.

What can be more captivating than the account given by an Athenian orator, of the state of social life in a country adorned by the dominion of the arts !

“ Ελευθέρας δὲ τὰ τε πρὸς τὰ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν,
“ καὶ ἐς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους των κατ’ ἡμέραν επιτη-
“ δευμάτων ὑποψίαν, οὐδὲ ὀργῆς τὸν πέλαις, εἰ κατ’
“ ἡδονὴν τι δρᾷ, ἔχοντες, οὐδὲ ἀζημίους μὲν, λυπηρὰς
“ δε τῇ ὀψει, ἀχθῆδύνας προσιδέμενοι. ἀνεπαχθῶς
“ δὲ τὰ ἴδια προσομιλοῦντες, τὰ δημόσια διὰ δέου-
“ μάλιστα

“ μάλισα ἔ παρανομῶμεν, τῶν τε αἰὲ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄν-
 “ των ἀκροάσει, καὶ τῶν νόμων, καὶ μάλισα αὐτῶν
 “ ὅσοι τε ἐπ’ ὠφελείᾳ τῶν ἀδικουμένων κεῖνται, καὶ
 “ οὔσοι ἄγραφοι ὄντες αἰσχύνην ὁμολογεμένην φέ-
 “ ρουσι.”

“ Φιλοκαλοῦμεν τε γὰρ μετ’ εὐτελείας, καὶ φιλο-
 “ σοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας· πλούτῳ τε ἔργου μᾶλ-
 “ λον ἐν καιρῷ ἢ λόγου κόμπῳ χρώμεθα· καὶ το
 “ πένεσθαι ἔχ ὁμολογεῖν τινὶ αἰσχρὸν, ἀλλὰ μὴ
 “ διαφεύγειν ἔργῳ, αἴσχιον.”

“ Διαφερόντως γὰρ δὴ καὶ τόδε ἔχομεν, ὥστε τολ-
 “ μᾶν τε οἱ αὐτοὶ μάλισα, καὶ περὶ ἧν ἐπιχειρή-
 “ σομεν, εκλογίζεσθαι. ὃ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀμαθία μὲν
 “ θράσος, λογισμὸς δὲ ὄκνον φέρει. κράτιστοι δ’ ἂν την
 “ ψυχὴν δικαίως κριθεῖεν οἱ τά τε θεινὰ καὶ ἡδέα
 “ σαφέςατα γιγνώσκοντες, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα μὴ ἀπο-
 “ τρεπόμενοι ἐκ των κινδύνων*.”

The

* “ We go through the offices of the state without
 “ obstructions from one another; and live together in
 “ the mutual endearments of private life without sus-
 “ picions: not angry with a neighbour for following
 “ the bent of his own humour, nor putting on that coun-
 “ tenance of discontent, which pains though it cannot
 “ punish. So that, in private life, we converse toge-
 “ ther

The plastic arts are those which, in ancient times, have been thought principally deserving to accompany and enforce the purposes of religion. They alone were deemed worthy to be the attendants of the gods.

“ther without diffidence or damage, whilst we dare
“not on any account offend against the public, through
“the reverence we bear to the magistrates and the
“laws ; chiefly to those *enacted* for redress of the injured, and to those *unwritten*, a breach of which is
“allowed disgrace.

“In our manner of living, we shew an elegance tempered with frugality, and we cultivate philosophy
“without enervating the mind. We display our wealth
“in the season of beneficence, and not in the vanity
“of discourse. A confession of poverty is disgrace to
“no man ; no effort to avoid it, is disgrace indeed.

“Herein also consists our distinguishing excellence,
“that in the hour of action we shew the greatest courage, and yet debate beforehand the expediency of
“our measures. The courage of others is the result
“of ignorance ; deliberation makes them cowards. And
“those undoubtedly must be owned to have the greatest souls, who, most acutely sensible of the miseries
“of war, and the sweets of peace, are not hence in the
“least deterred from facing danger.”—*Smith's Translation of Thucydides.* Book ii.

The

The Jupiter Olympius*, and Minerva of Phidias, the Apollo of Myron, and the Diana of Mentor, were believed capable of increasing the solemnity of public devotion.

In latter ages, painting has been equally elected to be the instrument of a more enlightened dispensation. It no longer indeed awed the soul with religious terrors; but, in aid of a system, to whose essence it belongs to calm the passions, and allay the perturbations of the spirit, it was employed in representing the most endearing and conciliating images; love, homage, devotion, social affection, charity, piety: the tender and enraptured mother, catching and reflecting the transports of her mysterious offspring, or uttering chastised sorrows over his appointed sufferings; the inspired teachers of religious truth, exemplars of fervid beneficence and patient resignation, imparting

* “Cujus pulchritudo adjecisse aliquod etiam receptæ religioni videtur; adeo majestas operis Deum æquavit.”—*Quintilian*.

light and comfort to the soul, or ease and health to the body; the spirits of heaven descending to rescue the injured from oppression and danger, or to strengthen and support the martyr in the hour of parting: these are the sentiments it has been the task of painting to invigorate; these are the examples it has impressed on the bosom of the proselyte, the faithful, the adorer!

From this benevolent province of art, the artist, unfortunately for the fame of our country, has been, at one time, driven by the luxurious ravages of power entrusted to sycophants and petty tyrants; and, at another, banished by the devout but mistaken zeal of the reformers of religion, who not only repressed the progress of painting, but aimed at the total extinction of its struggling flame. The vain profusion of Henry the Third profaned the sacred reputation of the arts; and by causing them to be considered as objects of luxury and extravagance, rendered them a subject of obloquy to succeeding reigns, solicitous of
no

no arts but those of war. In later days, they suffered injustice of a severer kind, deprived of the power of affording subsistence, and stigmatized as sources of irreligion and impiety. Even our Elizabeth, the zealous patroness of every other kind of knowledge, and possessing a mind diligently cultivated by learning, is said to have severely reproved the dean of her chapel, for presenting to her, as a new-year's gift, a prayer-book enriched with engravings and drawings, representing the holy sufferings of the saints and martyrs, and to have given him a strict charge never again to let such irregularities find their way into places of divine worship*.

Prejudices of this nature are at present removed alike from the minds of the govern-

* Fortunately the dean found pardon by pleading his ignorance, and declaring that the book was the work of a German. "It is well," replied the offended queen, "that it was from a stranger; had it been any of our subjects, we should have questioned the matter."—*See Barry's Inquiry.*

ment and of the people ; but how much soever it may become a subject of astonishment, it is unfortunately certain, that by no subsequent sovereign or government, since the days of Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, has a retribution been offered to the arts of design, equivalent to the blow which, in this latter period, was levelled at their existence. Italy and France have in their turn basked in the golden ray of opportunity ; they have seen the wishes and the talents of their respective governments mixing their genial powers to awaken and perpetuate the splendour of the arts, and each of those countries has shone with momentary brightness under that favouring influence. In England, the full trial of auspicious days yet remains to be made. Whether the powers of English minds be equal to the arduous task, is a problem which no circumstances of latter times have hitherto combined to solve: The assertion of this truth is due to our character as a people : in justice to that character, let us not forget that the trial *does* yet

yet remain for us; and that, until it be made, there exists, amidst the enlightened researches of philosophy and science, *one* deficient point in our efforts for intellectual excellence.

Throughout this brief view of the importance of the arts to general fame, it has been constantly assumed (consistently with the sentiment taken from Longinus in the initial motto of this chapter), that every nation, possessing powers and opportunity to illustrate the high endowments with which man is invested by Providence, is thereby laid under an indispensable obligation to aspire to the summit of human eminence. Every rival is to be surpassed. Humility, however graceful in an individual, is inconsistent with the exertions of a collective body. A *nation* must assert, must attain; and is allowed to announce, and even boast, its attainments. Those to whom the destinies of such nations are entrusted, are called upon to provide the means of greatness; nor can the hand of power be absolved

solved from its task, until it can be said that
“ Our city is become the school of all others,
“ and that every man amongst us is ex-
“ cellently formed for all the various scenes
“ of active life *.”

In this progress of greatness, the course of the fine arts cannot be omitted nor neglected. According to the degree of *their* cultivation will be estimated the national portion of intellectual sensibility, and its capacity for advancement in mental elegance. The acute discernment of political institutions, the prudence and equity of laws, may justly render a people the admiration of the world, and the thunder of its arms, and prowess of its valour, make it the object of universal terror ; but the tribute of those affections which bind mankind in chains of amity, and link the *hearts* of nations to each other, is only to be won by the demonstration of a superior power in the improvement of *mental* pleasure. A na-

* Thucydides. Oration of Pericles.

tion is awful by its wisdom, tremendous by its arms, lovely by its intellectual arts.

Of the points which constitute the sovereignty of Athenian fame, England has achieved many in an equal degree with that envied state; some in a greater. Where then lies the cause that prevents us from adding to the statement of our successful rivalry those points, which must either be of easier acquisition, or, if more difficult, then more worthy to be acquired? What but the cultivation of the arts, can finally and fully wipe out the charges brought, and still believed to be in force, against our national character? If we are said to be proud, if we are said to be disdainful, if we are said to be ingulfed and bound in commercial calculations, what better than the attainment of eminence in the arts can evince the fallacy of these accusations? If such an opportunity is neither sought for, nor presents itself, the future historian, guided by impartiality, will weep over the destinies of a people, with whom no efforts
for

for fame were inauspicious, but whose utmost faculties were never put to the test in pursuits of competition for those honours, the attainment of which fixes the splendour of the human name and character.

CHAP. II.

OF THE CULTIVATION OF PUBLIC TASTE, AND
THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARTS ON THE
MORALS OF A PEOPLE.

'Tis use alone that sanctifies expense,
And splendour borrows all her rays from sense.

POPE, MOR. ESS.



IN what degree the establishment of the Plastic Arts in their higher spheres, might contribute to fame, and to the pre-eminence of our national character, it has been the endeavour of the preceding chapter to demonstrate. The present will contain the general outlines of plans formed, at different times, by the artists of our country, with a view to fulfil those duties which they conceived to fall peculiarly to their share, amidst

amidst the general prosecution of national grandeur. The zeal and fervid spirit that distinguish the style in which the latter of these plans is recommended in the letter annexed, will not fail to make a considerable impression on the reader, and will render every farther argument superfluous to those who set a high value on triumphal monuments of their country's glory.

But, justly splendid as such memorials appear, and sanctioned as they are by the consent and applause of every age, there is yet a different point of view in which it is here designed to consider the importance of the fine arts; a point in which they will hardly fail to engage all suffrages,—even of those, who notwithstanding what has been urged, may still be little inclined to regard mere fame as a sufficient object for costly and laborious competition. The point alluded to is the influence which an improved, or inferior, state of the plastic arts, is likely to obtain over the morals of a people.

That vice, both in the mind and in outward

ward action, is intimately connected with bad taste or want of taste, has been asserted by many observers of mankind, and is an observation of too palpable a nature to be controverted.

Taste is the power of selecting the *best* from all other parts of its object; and of whatever nature be the object, this faculty cannot fail, according to its respective degree, to operate conspicuously on human choice, whence its effect is necessarily extended to conduct and character.

No man may aspire to rank with the highest individuals of his species, who is not able *at least to perceive* the excellence and beauty of virtue. Indeed, those aggregate maxims of conduct which we agree to class in the code of her laws, are so avowedly conducive to the real interests and happiness of men, that whoever has not the force of mind to attain the conviction of their value, or wants either the natural impulse, or the due direction, of the mind towards that

attainment, can never lay claim to the palm given to an exalted few, the gratitude, homage, and benevolence of their fellow-creatures. Without this force, or this direction, the most splendid talents, the most active abilities, receive from men, at the best, a mixed tribute of wonder and pity. Examples, in both parts of this assertion, will easily be found: in the one they are too few to be overlooked; in the other they are too numerous to be recounted.

To aid this force of the mind, to call forth and guide its beneficial impulses, to give and confirm its direction to its highest ends, is within the province of taste. It is within its province, from its essential nature as above defined, to infuse new strength in every propensity to right, and enfeeble every seductive motive to wrong. In a polished nation, half the portion of existing vice may be ascribed to bad taste, to the want of that cultivation of the mind, which leads to an habitual preference of the *better* to the *worse*. The invisible sceptre which
sways

sways and fixes the public morals of a people, is held by the hand of taste.

“ It is this difference of pursuit,” says Goldsmith, “ which marks the morals and
 “ characters of mankind ; which lays the
 “ line between the enlightened philosopher
 “ and the half-taught citizen ; between the
 “ civil citizen and the illiterate peasant ;
 “ between the law-obeying peasant and the
 “ wandering savage of Africa. The man,
 “ the nation, must therefore be good,
 “ whose chiefest luxuries consist in the re-
 “ finement of reason ; and reason can never
 “ be universally cultivated, unless guided
 “ by taste ; which may be considered as the
 “ link between science and common sense,
 “ the medium through which learning should
 “ ever be seen by society.”

If this preliminary question be fairly stated, the importance of the arts, in the respect mentioned, is an argument of easy and natural consequence. Every path of instruction, laid open to the minds of the people, will necessarily produce an influence on

their morals, in proportion as each of those paths is more or less liable to the access of taste. But the cultivation, and, in successful circumstances, the *exaltation* of taste, is the necessary, primary, and continual object of the arts. It is by the improvement and enlargement of this faculty, by adding hourly to the force of its discriminating qualities, that the artist hopes to vindicate his rightful claim to honour and distinction. If not appreciated, if not judged, by this internal tribunal of the intellect, he would disdain rewards, however splendid, and regard the most sumptuous munificence as an obligation demanding indeed his gratitude, but not as a remuneration congenial to his wishes or his labours.

From this argument a subsequent conclusion will ensue; that wherever the cultivation of the arts is once begun, it must soon become of the highest civil importance that the organs of cultivation should be salutarily employed.

It cannot admit of a question, whether
painting

painting and sculpture possess a power of producing moral effects *of some kind*. Whatever is capable of producing emotions in us, of affecting our passions, of exciting indignation or disgust, pleasure or horror, must be allowed to have a corresponding influence on our minds and manners. This power we seem to have tacitly conceded to sculpture, by the general admission of its productions into our churches. When we seek to immortalize public veneration and regret for departed worth, we direct the marble to breathe over the ashes of the illustrious dead, and consign to posterity the sculptured image of

“ Chiefs, grac’d with scars, and prodigal of blood ;
 “ Stern patriots, who for sacred freedom stood ;
 “ Just men, by whom impartial laws were given ;
 “ And saints, who taught, and led, the way to
 heaven.”

We think this at once the most impressive (as it is the most durable) memorial of virtue, and the readiest and aptest method of forming the heart to emulation. From

painting we do not seem to be yet aware that equal benefits are to be derived* ; yet
in

* To the memory of the lamented HERO of the NILE, the BALTIC, and the STRAITS, the sculptor will be charged with the sadly-pleasing task of consecrating every honour which his art can achieve. But it is no derogation from the powers of sculpture to say, that it is not within the single province of that art to form an adequate record of the victories of NELSON. The marble monument will call the tear into our eyes, and bid our bosoms heave with regret, when it displays the effigy of the man or the emblems of his virtues : such tributes his immortal name demands. But the present occasion calls likewise for more expanded remembrances of the scenes in which he became illustrious. Extensive actions claim to be shewn, and these are faintly represented by sculpture, by means of bas-relief, and their representation generally imperfect in effect, unless aided by accessory inscriptions.

Painting, on the contrary, embraces and has powers to express the wider scope of the hero's actions. She can shew the varied hues of distant climes, which he traversed with the speed of winds, and in which he shone, now firm and cool in council, now eager and impatient in pursuit of the enemy, now ardent and intrepid in fight, and now, alas ! expiring in victory. She can shew seas tinged with the blood of his country's foes,
their

in our general reasonings, we readily acknowledge the sources of power over the mind to be the same in the two arts, with the balance perhaps in favour of painting*.

their flags flying before his name, or their ships hurled into the air by his thunders. Can the examples of his patriotic prowess be too frequently inprest on our sight, on our remembrance? Can they be too forcibly commended to the emulation of posterity?

* The comparative merits of these two branches of art has been often anxiously contested by their respective professors, who have ably displayed the peculiar excellences of each. The account will probably remain forever open between them. There is indeed one distinct boast which it is in the power of sculpture alone to make. By reason of the durability of its works, it becomes, in process of time, if not the only credible witness of the existence of the sister art, at least the only testimony of her past eminence. Sculpture enjoys the privilege of being the criterion by which are appreciated the reports relative to cotemporary painting. If the works of such artists as Praxiteles, Apollodorus, and Agasias, had been less eminently deserving of our admiration, we should have been at a loss to judge what degree of credit we ought to give to the accounts transmitted by authors respecting Protogenes, or Timanthes, Zeuxis, or Apelles.

It will be evident on examination, that whatever be the exalted ends to which the works of our best poets aspire, of ruling the imagination, of expanding the affections, improving the heart, inflaming at once and regulating devotion, the same are equally the aim, and equally within the reach of painting. Does a Milton or a Young enforce more fervently, or more powerfully, the lessons of truth and of religion, than a Raffaele, when he paints the death of the perjured Ananias or the glorious transfiguration of our Redeemer? Is the tenderness of maternal love, is the purity of sainted thoughts and looks "commencing with the skies," more sensibly commended to our hearts by the sweet effusions of a Watts or an Addison, than by the Madonna, commonly termed *della Seggiuola*, or by the Saint Cecilia*, from the hand of the same painter? Do holy awe and sorrow more fill our hearts over the poem, than over the picture, of Christ sink-

* Formerly in the church of St. Giovami in Monte, at Bologna.

ing under the burthen of the cross, or surrendering life on it, to save mankind?

In fact, the plastic art, and that of poetry, have no strife with each other; their purposes and their effects are the same; they search the same springs for charms that surprise and enchain the intellect, and exercise their influence by the force of the same powers. It may be added, that both are best employed in mutual illustration; and both may be considered as in some measure incomplete, unless they are combined*. The moral advantage of both consists in mixing instruction with delight, and it is to this purpose that the homogeneous powers of their natures are eminently suited. The *modes* only, employed to convey instruction thus mingled with delight, are different in the two arts.

* The three arts of poetry, design (or the plastic art), and music, have the same common union; no instance, I believe, can be adduced, in which the effect produced by either of them would not be increased by the simultaneous adhibition of one or both of the others.

The distinguishing properties of painting, in this respect, are so well described by Richardson, that it is difficult to offer to the reader any account of them equally satisfactory with that contained in the following passages :

“ The great and chief ends of painting
“ are to raise and improve Nature, and to
“ communicate ideas ; not only those which
“ we may receive otherwise, but such as
“ without this art could not possibly be
“ communicated ; whereby mankind is ad-
“ vanced higher in the rational state, and
“ made better ; and this in a way easy, ex-
“ peditious, and delightful.”

“ Our ideas of all visible things, and
“ of some that are invisible, or creatures
“ of the imagination, are raised and im-
“ proved in the hands of a good painter,
“ and the mind thereby filled with the
“ noblest, and therefore the most delight-
“ ful, images.”

“ Not only such ideas are conveyed to us
“ by the help of this art as merely give us
“ pleasure, but such as enlighten the un-
“ derstanding

“ derstanding and put the soul in motion.
“ From hence are learned the forms and
“ properties of things and persons ; we are
“ thus informed of past events ; by this
“ means joy, grief, hope, fear, love, aver-
“ sion, and the other passions and affec-
“ tions of the soul, are excited ; and above
“ all, we are not only thus instructed what
“ we are to believe and practise, but our de-
“ votion is inflamed, and (whatever may
“ have happened to the contrary) it may
“ thus also be rectified.”

“ The ideas thus conveyed, come not by
“ a slow progression of words, or in a lan-
“ guage peculiar to one nation only, but
“ with such a velocity, and in a manner so
“ universally understood, that it is some-
“ thing like intuition or inspiration*.”

Having considered the value of painting,
from the extensive power it possesses over
the mind, and the advantages accruing to a
state from its just and virtuous cultivation,

* Discourse on the Science of a Connoisseur.

let us look for a moment on the absolute and inevitable danger of neglect in this point.

The pleasure, naturally arising from the contemplation of works of painting and the other imitative arts, a pleasure felt by, and common to, the people in common life, of all nations and characters, will of necessity find its vent in society in some channel or other. How many channels of public depravation are constantly opening, how many artifices of moral pollution are every hour put in practice and every moment kept in play, by profligate dexterity and mercenary cunning, need not be mentioned to any inhabitant of a metropolis. It cannot therefore be considered unworthy of a legislature, sedulously watchful of the morals of a great people, to assign a proper province for the gratification of this natural, and naturally innocent, pleasure, by means of such an institution as shall provide a safe and beneficial store of continual public amusement. The activity of desire, if not properly directed, must either idly dissipate itself in trifles and insipid vanity, or suffer perversion

charms of painting were of a nature too seductive for his congregation, and that the forms and varied tints of beauty might divert their thoughts from heavenly to earthly objects, and excite emotions inconsistent with religion*.

How

* I cannot wholly divest myself of surprise, that in a cultivated mind, whose professional studies had necessarily been so abstracted from all seductive objects of a sensual nature, the idea of *painting* should have been wholly confined to images of the kind just mentioned, and the art regarded only in the faculty which it possesses in common with all other attainments (whether of art or science), of contributing, *when improperly used*, to the corruption of the mind.

I shall quote a sentiment of a different complexion :

“ When I look upon Raphael’s picture of Our Saviour appearing to his Disciples after his resurrection, I cannot but think the just disposition of that piece has in it the force of many volumes on the subject. Such endeavours as this of Raphael, and of all men not called to the altar, are collateral helps not to be despised by the ministers of the gospel.”—*Guardian*, vol. i. No. 21.

The learned and pious Atterbury speaks of our church music (to which no objection has yet been made)
in

How far this refusal called in question the judgment and religious discretion of the Sovereign who had consigned the cupola of St. Paul's to the pencil of Sir James Thornhill, it would be wandering from the design of these pages to examine. It is our

in terms applicable with equal force to painting: "One of its principal uses being," says he, "to break with a grateful violence that engagement of thought which we often bring with us into the church from those we last conversed with, as well as those accidental distractions which arise during the course of divine service."

"Our misapplication of mind at such times is often so great, and we so deeply immersed in it, that there needs some very strong and powerful charm to rouse us from it." This charm he asserts to be found in sacred music; "because," he adds, "such is our nature, that even the best things and most worthy of our esteem, do not always employ and detain our thoughts, in proportion to their real value, unless they be set off and greatened by some outward circumstances, which are fitted to raise admiration and surprise in the breasts of those who hear or behold them."

Sermon on the Usefulness of Church Music.

present

present concern to consider it only as connected with the moral uses which might have been derived from the labours of the artists ; and even on this point argument is now unnecessary, since an advanced degree of information respecting the arts has obviated all objections of the kind above-mentioned, and evinced that the real province of works of art, dedicated to religious purposes, is to concentrate, not to distract, the attention of the pious worshipper ; to enforce by consentaneous impressions the subject of his thoughts ; to act as a comment, of obvious application, on the doctrines inculcated by the teacher.

The opportunity lost by the rejection of this proposal, cannot but furnish a subject of public regret. The animation and zeal of the artists who offered themselves on the occasion, would have led to the most strenuous exertions of their talents, and their example might have prevailed in a degree sufficient to give us, from that moment, the lead in the moral school of historic art.

Repressed

Repressed in their first attempt, and fearful that there might yet be found a remaining scruple in the breast of some, however few, with regard to rendering the solemn temples of devotion schools of national taste, our artists, at a later period, sought out a sphere wholly free from that objection, yet equally open to professional exertion. They conceived a design of an undertaking aptly calculated to form a magnificent feature of national grandeur.

It will be remembered that, some few years since, a proposal was agitated for erecting a column, or other public monument, as a memorial of our naval glory. Various opinions having been offered, and various schemes devised for this great national purpose, the Artists of the Royal Academy, in a meeting of their General Assembly, concurred in drawing up a plan, which they afterwards presented to His Majesty, of

A DOME, or GALLERY of BRITISH HONOUR,
to be progressively erected, and to commence
with the construction of such large parts as
might

might (with architectural propriety, and according to a settled design) be afterwards united to others; for instance, 1st, a vestibule; 2dly, wings; 3dly, a dome, &c. &c.; the interior of each part to be likewise progressively filled with historical representations, in painting and sculpture, of the great achievements of the English, martial, civil, commercial, and colonial.

A plan thus calculated to employ the greatest talents England should produce in the three departments of the plastic arts, and to raise the arts themselves to their just eminence, was recommended by farther considerations of utility, derived from the improvement, consequently to be expected, in all the elegant branches of manufacture, as well as the establishment, amongst us, of several subordinate species of art, hitherto regarded as sources of exclusive revenue to the Continent. It was also probable that it would be attended with the revival of another branch of revenue, by renewing the sale of historical prints on the Continent; a sale once so extensively

tensively carried on, and so productive, from the unexampled prices paid for our engravings of that kind.

The general scheme of this plan was suggested by a letter (mentioned in the foregoing pages), which was, with manly sentiment, thus openly addressed to the editor of one of our daily journals.

“ SIR,

“ Having lately seen by the public papers, that it is in contemplation to erect a column, statue, or other monument, in honour of the British Navy, I trust it cannot be thought unbecoming in any man to offer his sentiments respecting the best mode of carrying so laudable a design into execution, and rendering it at the same time a monument of the good taste of the nation ; as I suppose every man must feel, on such an occasion, that whatever, by meanness of conception, or clumsiness of execution, is disgraceful to the national taste, must be equally disgraceful to the glorious end in view, and reflect

reflect lasting dishonour, instead of credit, on its liberal supporters.

“Attention to this point is the more necessary, as the valour and superior dexterity of the British seamen have been felt, admired, and fully acknowledged, by the surrounding nations; but, it must be owned, we have not as yet been equally successful in impressing them with an advantageous opinion of British taste. Some advances, however, within a few years past, have been made, even in this respect; and the attention that has been paid us in consequence, should render us doubly cautious, and rouse us to redoubled energy, that we may not again fall into contempt—contempt, accompanied by insult and derision; for the watchful jealousy already excited by the progress of the arts, since the establishment of the Royal Academy, will not suffer a failure, in an object of so high a kind, to pass in mere silence and neglect.

“Being a private individual, without rank, and without influence, I should not have
dared

dared to obtrude my thoughts on the public, but that I feel my full share of enthusiasm in the generous cause, and that my line of study leading me to the immediate consideration of such subjects, I naturally imagined it possible that I might have more ideas rise on the occasion, than could readily offer themselves to every one ; but far from presumptuously wishing to dictate to others, I only profess to throw out a few hints for the consideration of those who may have more judgment and taste than myself, and are more particularly engaged in the design ; and happy shall I be, and think myself amply rewarded for my trouble, if my conceptions should only be the means of exciting the attention, and drawing forth the ideas, of some one abler to do justice to the sublimity of the subject.

“ A work like that in question, in addition to durability in the materials, magnificence in the structure, and taste in the execution, ought to abound in sources of instruction and entertainment ; it should be as interesting

ing in itself, as it is, from the nature of its subject, capable of keeping curiosity always alive, and of being viewed with fresh admiration for a thousand years.

“ A column may at first surprise by its magnitude, and please by its beauty ; but the uniformity of its impression on the sight, alike on all sides, and at all times, must quickly render it uninteresting ; and after a few ages of disregard, posterity may only view it as a quarry of materials for other edifices. A colossal statue might do more, in some respects, than a column, but in magnitude and effect it must be inferior ; and the inhospitable climate, by wearing away the sharpness and delicacy of the workmanship, would prevent its being long considered as an object of attention, in point of taste ; the ideas suggested by it would be of too refined and abstracted a nature to allow it to be very instructive, and it must at last partake too much of the uniformity of a pillar, to be capable of affording that plenitude and succession of entertainment which
ought

ought always to accompany great durability.

“ Having shewn the insufficiency, in some points, of the plans already proposed, it remains now to consider how all the important and necessary qualities above-mentioned can be combined. This, I conceive, may be effected by the adoption of the following scheme, in which the whole powers of the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, may be united ; and what subject ever offered itself more worthy of such a combination !

“ What I would recommend, in preference to either a column or a statue, is—*First*, that on some convenient spot in the metropolis, a circular building should be erected, as nearly on the plan of the Pantheon at Rome as the different designation of it will allow, into which the light should be admitted through the dome, at or near the top. *Secondly*, That the whole internal circle should be divided into compartments, on which should be painted a certain number of the most brilliant

liant victories and remarkable achievements, judiciously and carefully selected from the naval history of Great Britain, beginning from the remotest periods, and coming gradually down to the present day. *Thirdly*, That between every two of the pictures, against spaces left for that purpose, there should be placed one or more statues, of the size of life, of the greatest heroes of the British Navy who commanded in the actions represented on the adjoining canvasses, and to whose skill and intrepidity the success is chiefly to be attributed. Under the principal paintings, I would have placed a smaller set, relative to our trade, commerce, colonization, discoveries, and other subjects connected with, and growing out of, the great power and prosperity of our Navy. *Fourthly*, That over the whole should be hung a series of half-length portraits of other great men and gallant officers, who, though not of the first class, have deserved well of their country. As this circle will be large, some space in it may be reserved for
future

future claimants, yet perhaps unborn, who will not, we have every reason to hope, add less to the honour of their country, nor fall short of the celebrity of their glorious predecessors. *Fifthly*, That in the centre of the building, under the dome, there be placed a colossal group in marble, representing Neptune doing homage to Britannia; and at the head of the room, a statue of his present Majesty George the Third, in whose reign the British naval power has reached a point of exaltation which seems to preclude the possibility of its being carried much higher by our successors.

“ I pretend not, nor indeed is this the time or place to enter into the detail; on that the architect, the painter, and the sculptor, must be consulted; and happily the Royal Academy can supply, not one only, but many, in each department of art, of ability fully equal to the great end proposed. It is sufficient here to remark, that *simplicity* and *grandeur* should be the leading characteristics of the building and its decorations, both

within and without. What an effect might a design like this, happily planned and executed, produce ! How magnificent, how instructive it might be made ! How entertaining to trace down from the earliest records of our history, the gradual increase of our Navy ! to remark the different stages of its growth, from a few simple canoes in its infancy, to the stupendous magnitude of an hundred first rate men of war ! Miracles of the mechanic arts, proudly bearing Britain's thunder ! the bulwark of England ! the glory of Englishmen, and the terror and admiration of the world ! How flattering to the imagination to anticipate the pleasure of walking round such an edifice, and surveying the different subjects depicted on its walls ! Battles, under all the varied circumstances of day, night, moon-light, storm, and calm !—the effects of fire, water, wind, and smoke, mingled in terrific confusion ! In the midst, British valour triumphantly bearing down all opposition, accompanied by humanity, equally daring and ready to succour

succour the vanquished foe ! Discoveries, in which we see delineated the strange figures, and still stranger costume of nations, till then unknown, and where the face of Nature itself is exhibited under a new and surprising aspect. Then to turn and behold the statues and portraits of the enterprising commanders and leaders in the actions and expeditions recorded, and compare their different countenances ; here a Drake and an Anson ! there a Blake, a Hawke, a Boscawen, and a Cooke !

“ In such a place, what man, or description of men, can fail to be interested ? The philosopher, the man of genius, the man of taste, the naturalist, the physiognomist, the soldier as well as the sailor ; in short, all conditions might resort here for study, or for amusement. Age might here find subject for pleasing meditation, and here youth might imbibe virtuous enthusiasm.

“ What a noble field for honourable contention would also be opened by such an undertaking, to our artists of all denominations ;

tions; and what might not be expected from their exertions, when equally operated upon by patriotism, grandeur and celebrity of subject, and personal emulation, who now produce so much, almost without encouragement, and without notice!

“It is indeed the opinion of many persons of the highest consideration, that nothing but an opportunity of this kind is wanting, to enable them to rise as superior to the justly admired schools of Italy and Flanders, in the execution of their works, as they confessedly are already in the choice and composition of their subjects. If so, what would any of the boasted galleries and collections have to offer in comparison of such an assemblage as is here proposed; and how deeply are not the policy and interest, as well as the honour of the nation, engaged in the furtherance of such a design!

“I have been encouraged, Sir, to trouble you thus far with my sentiments, by the advice of several individuals of acknowledged judgment and taste, who are convinced as
well

well as myself, that no plan truly efficient and honourable in all points of view, can be adopted, that partakes not in a great degree of what I have now proposed, which is of a nature so powerfully and generally interesting, that I doubt not it might be carried into effect to great advantage as a pecuniary speculation merely. The public exhibition, with the publication of a set of engravings of the work, would probably pay the expence of the whole, with considerable interest, and the nation would derive the benefit from it of being greatly enriched, at the same time that the rapid dispersion of the prints into all quarters of the globe, would contribute more than can well be imagined or described, to give an exalted and universal impression of British valour, taste, munificence, and genius.

“ I am, Sir, with great respect,

“ JOHN OPIE*.”

* Vide True Briton, 1800.

For the purpose of carrying into execution their magnificent and honourable project, the framers of the plan adopted by the Academy conceived that the sum of 5000*l.* per ann. would be an amply adequate allowance; a part to be laid out in the building, and a part in works of painting and sculpture; and, in the eyes of men little versed in pecuniary calculations, such a sum appeared to make no great or objectionable figure amidst “the ocean of public expenditure*.” This assistance to the progress of English art the Academicians thought it, therefore, incumbent on them to solicit; and although their zeal on the the occasion failed to become an object of immediate attention, the design of the GALLERY is too congenial with English minds, and with the benevolent regard of the Royal Patron of the Academy, to be considered as rejected†.

The

* Rhymes on Art.

† The relative connexion which the *Gallery of British Honour* would hold with the Royal Academy and the British

The effects which such a display of national glory would produce on enlightened minds, ambitious of virtuous fame, are easy to be calculated; and it is hardly to be questioned that the same influence would extend itself, though less rapidly, yet not with less certainty, over every class and degree of society. Will it seem absurd to say, that by laying open such a gallery to public leisure, and by the concomitant general exhibition of engravings * from so respectable and pleasing a source of familiar interest, greater benefit

British Institution, is obvious. These two would successively afford the truest test of the talents fitted to adorn such a national trophy.

* It necessarily follows, that engravings would be made from all the works exhibited in the gallery; they indeed form a necessary appendage to the scheme; and they would, no doubt, be found to form a very considerable article of revenue by their exportation to foreign countries; the late decrease of profits in that respect being now ascertained to have arisen from the entire want of just and adequate employment for the talents of our engravers. The high esteem in which the plates from

benefit would accrue to the bulk of the people, in a moral view, than can easily be hoped from the prosecution of an ignorant or profligate publisher of licentious prints, which are not less a disgrace to the crowd that eagerly surrounds his window, than a just source of punishment to himself. Such disgrace and such prosecutions could indeed scarcely exist, if a regular effort were made to counteract, in kind, these scandalous exhibitions. A publisher, of the description alluded to, places in view prints representing scenes of vulgar sensuality, because he considers them as attractive. Did an opposite window display other subjects of so superior an interest as to draw away his crowd, he would not fail speedily to exchange his wares, and to exhibit those only of the better and more prevailing class.

the NATIONAL SUBJECTS of the *Death of General Wolfe in the arms of victory*, the *Battle off La Hogue*, &c. were held in every market in Europe, will sufficiently shew the probable result of an English gallery in this point.

It

It is impossible, as has been said, not to be aware of the unfortunate influence of all vicious allurements ; but, as works of the noxious kind just mentioned, are for the most part the productions of men of mean capacity, it can hardly be asserted, that a public, of whatever rank, would continue to waste its leisure on such despicable objects, while its contemplative faculties might be amused with works of genius and taste, rendered familiar, and brought home to its bosom by the most fascinating of all interests, national sympathy. To assert this, would be to suppose a people wholly destitute of the seeds of those valuable qualities which opportunity every where appears to cultivate with success : it would be, in our own country, to suppose the people destitute of every noble sentiment which they have so conspicuously displayed in the present interesting moments of our political state.

It does not therefore appear improbable, that some of the most disgraceful sources of mental corruption would be wholly destroyed

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by

by substituting an adequate supply of more salutary amusement to the avidity* of PUBLIC TASTE.

* If any one doubt the existence of this disposition in the public at the present moment, let him ask himself, at what shop-windows does he most frequently find his passage impeded by crowds? Are they not invariably those of the printsellers? Let him reflect at the same time, whether the crowd be, in his opinion, employed in looking at the objects most fit to be presented to it. Painting is a school of information to the unlettered as well as to the learned.

CHAP. III.

OF THE INTERFERENCE OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY IN SUPPORT OF THE PLASTIC ARTS.

“ These are imperial works, and worthy kings.”

POPE, MORAL ESSAYS.

THE importance of the arts, as well to the greatness as to the moral character of a nation, having been (it is hoped, *justly*) stated, in the obvious reflections offered in the foregoing pages, it will not be the presumptuous aim of the present chapter to enforce the consideration of the subject, by pointing out more strongly the public encouragement of the Arts of Design as a task incumbent on the high faculties of predominant states, as a debt for which they are responsible to a nation and to mankind.

If, on contemplating a duty of such magnitude, the extensive and capacious mind of an enlightened government find therein no adequate employment for thoughts of conscious greatness, no food for honourable ambition, no theme of virtuous praise, it is not within the hopes of the Writer of these sketches to suggest new excitements of attention. Arduous indeed is then the task to break the magic seal of that urn, in which the genius of English painting, like the fabled beings of Arabian fancy*, has long lain pent and robbed of substantial form, doomed for a circle of years to utter unheeded sighs, and then perhaps to slumber forever !

Dii melius vertant !

But should a wish for the accomplishment of unrivalled national fame, for the extension of peaceful human intercourse, for the establishment of more discriminate attach-

* See *Thousand and One Nights*.

ment to moral order, should such motives awaken a desire for the effectual progress of arts, so eminently subservient to those purposes, it is here designed to represent how inadequate to their protection and security must be all methods to which a powerful and permanent patronage does not lend its organizing and supporting hand.

It is due to candour previously to state, that opinions occasionally delivered by artists themselves, in moments probably of insulted merit or wounded pride, may be produced as militating against this theory. They have been heard to assert, that it is not from the smiles of courts, not from the influence of rank, not from the patronage of power, that genius lights his living fires, or robes him in his splendid array. Let such language be interpreted by its proper lexicon, let it be construed as merely the figurative expressions of passion, urged to retort by the consciousness of slighted talents. On a cooler examination, the case will

will appear very different, as it will be presently attempted to prove.

Nothing indeed can be more dangerous than a doctrine which tends to discourage the *great* from fostering the arts, by holding forth as an unquestionable tenet, that genius is a force which cannot be restrained, and that wherever it really exists, it will make its way, in spite of all obstacles,—perhaps improved by collision. If this were satisfactory as general reasoning, to what end were all the cultivation and encouragement given to various parts of learned study? To what purpose were our universities? The best and only requisite answer to such a doctrine is experience. When did genius thus burst its way in an unprepared soil? Have not Rafael, Correggio, Titian, Rubens, risen on the previously methodized labours of their respective schools? In a sister art, did not *even the wild* Shakspeare shine in the lap of English learning? Were this wondrous ray of graphic genius to appear amongst us,

.nat

what would be its fate in the present un-ripened and unorganized state of English art? It would dazzle for a day, as it ever must; would be assailed by critics from its first dawn on the horizon, idolized by connoisseurs, gazed at, talked of, followed in crowds by the public, and then left, alike by all, to the events of chance or destiny.

- In the case of an artist of extraordinary promise appearing amongst us, what would be the extravagant eagerness, what would be the ridiculous crowd of the multitude pressing around his door, on his first arrival in London! Not extravagant, not ridiculous, from any improper degree in which he would be the object of attention; his merits, his genius, would justly lay claim to the highest; but ridiculous, because, while the painter pursued the natural course of improvement, whither would fly the zeal of applause, whither the rage of curiosity? Far from enabling him, or even assisting his endeavours, to reach the heights of his art, what, amidst the fervid tide of admiration,
would

would be the encouragement held forth to him ? To build the lofty pile of historic, or ideal excellence ? No : to paint the features of his delighted gazers ; and, ever ready as the public patronage of real merit is supposed to be, this great artist would probably be able to give an account of years passed in inadequate and uncongenial employment, from which the slow hand of judicious distinction could alone finally rescue him : but, in that interval, who could say what faculties of genius had lost the tide of their strength, what bright exhalations of the mind no sooner sparkled, than they fell and faded like a shooting star ? Far different might have been,—it cannot be presumptuous to say, far different *would be*, the case, if England exhibited a path in which patronage stood prepared to succour the passing candidate on the road of fame, and security awaited his arrival at the goal of excellence.

On the supposition, then, that the aid of patronage be requisite, to direct and
maintain

maintain the growth of the arts in general, it becomes proper to examine whether the intervention of PUBLIC AUTHORITY be that species of patronage absolutely necessary to the full attainment of the end in view, namely, the exaltation of the *Arts of Design*, so as to render them effectually conducive to the highest civil purposes they can embrace; or what reasonable hopes may be entertained of accomplishing the same purpose by other means. In which examination thus much is obvious; the attainment of the end proposed can flow from two sources only; *First*, From a plan of a comprehensive nature, which shall secure a continual progress of the arts towards its object; or, *Secondly*, From the general, or casual, employment of the artists under the patronage of individuals.

The present chapter here subdivides itself into two parts; and the latter consideration shall be brought first in question.

SECT. I.

*Of the Effects likely to arise from the Efforts
of our Artists under casual Employment,
or the Patronage of Individuals.*

OF * the censures which supercilious criticism has been so frequently inclined to cast on the state of painting, and on the objects to which it is chiefly restrained in the present day (censures probably the cotemporary attendants on *all* days), a great portion appears to be derived from an ill-founded notion that in this, as in other countries, every painter may safely devote himself to the nobler and more intellectual branches of his art, *if he pleases*. We are so accustomed in England to the contemplation of great

* A few of the remarks contained in this First Section, have been at a former period offered to the public through a different channel.

and

and successful individual exertions, that we scarcely pardon the man who fails of arriving at the highest goal to which his path in life directs him; and we make few allowances for collateral or contingent impediments. But, in the opulence of a commercial system, where these individual efforts chiefly rise to success, the artist alone will be found destitute of the means of providing for the unconstrained exercise of his aspiring industry. The consideration of the actual state and progress of a painter's professional life will best demonstrate the truth of this assertion.

It may escape the notice of a busy public, that those whom intellectual impulse leads away to the study of the arts, voluntarily forego the probable chances by which opulence is attained, and independent exertions supported. They throw themselves, at their outset, on the mercy of congenial dispositions, by whom they feel a confidence that they shall be encouraged and sustained in their lofty but tranquil endeavours to inform
and

and gratify the minds of those among whom they live.

Their progress in the world is too apt to open a scene of disappointment in these their fondest hopes, and to prove to them, that they must frequently descend from the delicious heights of fancy to the humble paths of ordinary labour. Unable to indulge the ambition of improving others, they have recourse to such parts of their art as are likely best to answer the ends of self-subsistence. Their occupations *then* depend on those, whose tastes they are so fortunate to please, and the employer thus becomes answerable for the mode of their progress. If the general taste had reached that high degree of maturity, at which it would desire, and relish, the excellence alone of art, the artist would of consequence be led to pursue its highest tracks; but, without this maturity of public taste, a similar result is hardly to be expected from individual zeal, and the artist rapidly sinks a reluctant, but helpless, victim of employment of a more contracted nature.

The

The necessity of resorting to such a measure must evidently be greater or less, in proportion to surrounding contingencies. In Italy an artist may paint, be poor, and yet live; he finds an apartment spacious enough for himself and his works, at an expence which is soon repaid by industry. In England, where his abode, his life's subsistence, almost his life itself, is, from the moment of his outset, tributary to the pecuniary demands of the state, what means has he to carry forward his slow, laborious task of excellence? It is surely less a subject of wonder that he should make few independent exertions, than that he should make any at all.

That the exertions in the class of history (when they *are* made), are independent, may be easily ascertained by the circumstance of the historical works, in our exhibitions, having rarely, at the time of their being sent thither, any other owner than the painter himself. They are hardly ever bespoke, but painted at the risk of the artist, from
his

his own arduous desire to excel, and are too frequently left, neglected, on his hands.

There prevailed indeed, a few years since, a vague mode of discourse concerning the encouragement given to the arts, by which any one who listened without forming other observations, would have been led to conclude that the English artists had only to devote themselves to the highest paths of their art, in order to secure the protection of the great and powerful; and that, whenever they have turned aside to meaner objects, their deviation must be attributed to incapacity: but it has been found, on candid examination, that, in the general history of our arts, the voice of disinterested patronage has scarcely returned an *echo* to the aspiring wishes of the artist; and that, when its hand has been stretched forth, it has seldom been to bestow more than a wreath of barren praise.

It is at first difficult to reconcile this statement with the expensive readiness, frequently witnessed amongst us, to purchase

chase the works of old and foreign masters. Sums, surpassing the most rapturous and visionary imagination of those who painted the works, have been paid for such of their productions as have deservedly become the bright ornaments of cabinets and galleries. But this luxury of opulence deserves to be carefully distinguished from the real encouragement of the arts; indeed it may occasionally exist without the smallest degree of love for them, or pleasure in their productions. Every purchase of the kind just mentioned may be considered as having less reference to a love or zeal for the arts, than to the prudent considerations of property and commerce. A picture, whose merit is ascertained by time, is justly regarded as a jewel of high value. Of this circumstance the most ignorant in painting are as well apprized as the profoundest connoisseur. Such a picture can, on any exigency, be transferred to another possessor with little or no diminution, nay, perhaps with increase, of the vender's wealth.

The

The purchase-money therefore can only be said to be exchanged from one stock to another, and the transaction no more indicates a love of painting, than common transfers at the Bank do a love of the three, or four, per cents.

If this be encouragement of art, it is, indeed, to be accomplished at a very cheap rate, without loss, without risk. But is such the generous hand, that from its own stores fosters the tender germ of genius; from its own sources waters the plant, watches its unfolding leaves, and shelters its blossoms? The purse, thus magnificently opened to welcome home the already established treasure of painting, gives a just encouragement to trade, but none to genius; fosters the broker, but adds no support to the artist*.

* A late collector is said to have declared, that he would on no account suffer the introduction of any work of our modern school into his collection, by whatever artist it might be painted!

Amidst the traffic of pictures, to which the present revolutionary times have given rise, a late distinguished nobleman added to the ornaments of our metropolis a gallery of the most celebrated works of which France and other countries were once possessed. The tribute of acknowledgment due to magnificence, and to the pleasure so rare a spectacle affords, it is a pleasing task to pay. How desirable were it, that to this stately collection were adjoined a room filled with a single work of each considerable artist of his own country! What splendour would be added to the accumulated treasure, if it appeared subservient to the excitement of national emulation, and if its possessor at once held forth to living competitors the challenge, the opportunity, and the means, of rivalling the fame of past ages!

The price of one picture among this sumptuous collection, would probably be nearly adequate to the furnishing such an apartment of THE ENGLISH SCHOOL*.

The

* It is said that the present possessor of this magnifi-

The English painter, thus remaining destitute of any advantage from the wealth which is yet lavished on pictures, must, if he design to procure subsistence, seek it in the subordinate branches of his art; or, if he desire to raise his art to its utmost point of exaltation, he must look to other sources of support.

It may appear, on a superficial glance, that he ought to find one of these sources in the Institution of the Royal Academy; but the Academy will be seen, on just consideration, to hold a very different office in aid of the arts. The Academy is designed to instruct its pupils in the proper methods by which they may aspire to rewards, in the various provinces of its schools, and to assist to the utmost their progress in study; but here ends its task.

The same observation may be applied to

cent collection has in contemplation the farther enlargement of his splendid treasure. It is to be wished that he may view the subject in the light here represented.

several

several other societies or establishments, by whatever name distinguished, whose professed object has been the encouragement and advancement of the fine arts. The Shakespeare and other galleries held out a momentary employment to the artists of the present day, while they themselves subsisted on the genius they rewarded. Nothing farther could be expected from them. All these were the schemes of benevolent and well-disposed ingenuity, destitute of permanent power. The hopes to which they gave birth were attended with consequences nearly fatal to some of the artists who assisted in their outset. From the transient nature of their construction, they are all necessarily vanished, and those painters who had deserted the household security of portraiture to follow the visions of fancy, found themselves, on their dissolution, suddenly destitute of habitual employment, and had thus the difficult task of beginning their career anew.

With regard to the effects likely to be

produced by a recent establishment, hope and expectation are naturally awakened; but as the general propositions for its administration, and other equally general purposes, are the whole that has hitherto been made known *, it is difficult at present to appreciate its probable influence †.

Whether this be, or not, the channel through which the arts are destined eventually to find their just height in England, it is sufficiently evident that the support requisite to such an exaltation of the arts as may tend to promote the fame and moral interests of a nation, must be of a permanent kind; a support to which the eye of

* This was written in August last.

† The British Institution (besides the premiums it proposes to hold forth to young artists) offers a general mart for works of eminent merit. An immediate gratification is thus furnished to the painter. His works will be taken off his hands, and find an entrance into galleries hitherto shut to them. It is greatly to be hoped that the next step will be the formation of a gallery of *select* examples of modern art.

aspiring youth may look forward with confidence, on which the unwearied student may securely rest his hopes, and to which he may lay an indisputable claim, whenever his genius and his talents shall have made him worthy to receive it.

Let us next, therefore, consider the effects to be expected from the patronage of public authority.



SECT. II.

Of the Effects to be expected from the Patronage of Public Authority.

THE advantage arising from the patronage of the plastic art by public authority would be twofold; it would direct and fix this great organ of instruction in a laudable and useful (and therefore its proper) path; and would afford a just and durable support to its exertions thus fitly methodized. What the fluctuating aid of an individual may have

momentarily effected, the authority of a government would render constant and permanent; the casual fragrance which a passing gale may have bestowed, would be converted to the richness of a perpetual spring.

In order to ascertain the probability of these benefits, it will be requisite to enter into a detail of the means by which they may be considered attainable. First, as to the proper path :

In Greece, the arts were applied to the highest purposes of society. They were employed to enforce religion, morality, and obedience to the laws. We do not know of their having ever greatly deviated from these purposes*. “ They multiplied enjoyments, “ and improved benevolence†.” Here then

* I have the authority of an eminent sculptor for saying, that the art of sculpture was constantly employed in Greece in the service of religion and patriotism; that there is neither group, statue, or basso-relievo, *of the first merit*, that does not belong to one of these distinctions.

† Lord Kaimes’ Sketches of Man.

they accomplished the signal end for which they are entrusted to man by his Creator.

In Italy they shone with inferior glory, because, although the bounty of sovereigns flowed in ample streams for their support, their cultivation was not always duly watched by the moral care of the state. The mighty genius of Titian was suffered to luxuriate on licentious objects; on a Danae awaiting the embraces of a golden Jove, or a ducal mistress caparisoned with the title of a Venus. While, in the performance of these works, he displayed powers near to divine, the purposes to which he applied them must be lamented, as debasing their value. The painter who could add delight and awe to temples, by his pictures of the Annunciation, and of St. Pietro Martire, sunk to be the magnificent pandar of royal luxury !

Since the last revival of the arts in this country, every arduous road, into which painting may be directed, is yet open before us; the ground yet untrodden; and it

remains for us either to exhibit an example of wisdom and virtue in the strict, moral, and religious use of the faculties of this art, or to let its blossoms drop prematurely to the earth, its graces be trampled in the dust, and to leave the name of England, in her brightest period, unadorned and waste, in the records of the arts.

It were vain to investigate what are the present powers of men who would be called forth to the commencement of so important a task: the question is not, in what degree they would at once be able to effect all that would fix the glory of our particular state, but in what manner and to what ends their various degrees of ability should be employed, to forward what must be, at all times, the just aim and purpose of every state.

“ *Hæc certamina nobis cum majoribus manent.*”

“ If ever the great taste in painting,” says Richardson, in the work quoted in the preceding

preceding chapter—" if ever that delightful,
 " useful, and noble art, *does* revive in the
 " world, 'tis probable 'twill be in England.
 " Let us," he continues, " at length disdain
 " as much to be in subjection in this respect
 " as in any other; let us put forth our
 " strength and employ our national virtue,
 " that haughty impatience of inferiority,
 " which seems to be the characteristic of
 " our nation, in this as on many other il-
 " lustrious occasions, and the thing will be
 " effected; the ENGLISH SCHOOL will rise
 " and flourish."

Next, as to a just and durable support :
 Let us previously consider the nature of the
 support at present given to the exertions of
 artists in foreign countries.

From the splendid earnestness of other
 great states to encourage the arts at the
 present moment, the English artist, if he may
 not derive a certain expectation, is at least
 induced to form a propitious omen for his
 native land. The efforts (however errone-
 ous) which France has lately made to

enrich and fertilize the genius of her country by the accumulation of treasures of ancient art, the capacious and comprehensive academic establishments of Russia and Milan, and the magnificence of royal patronage in Spain, justly challenge, and, it is hoped, do not defy the competition of England.

In Russia, where, according to the sentiments of her writers, the most gigantic strides are making towards the highest cultivation of moral life, the advancement of painting is considered as one of the objects highly worthy of national attention. It is regarded as conducive to the progress of her virtuous career; a homage more grateful to the arts, because more demonstrative of mental respect, than all that has ever been offered by that predatory lust, which trampling on national security and domestic property, has snatched their treasures to the grasp of a conqueror, and borne them violently away, at one period, from Greece, and at another, from Italy. In France, the living painter is oppressed and overlaid by
the

the splendid triumph of imported works. In Russia, rewards and honours are held forth with an open hand to the native artist. The President of the Academy of St. Petersburg, in the honours of competition which he offered to the young artists for the best memorial of the eminent and early-lost Koslovski; and the mild and enlightened Alexander, in his enhancement of the arts by the supplementary articles of the same institution*, seem to have touched the vital spring of their future greatness. Honour is the stimulus most congenial to the arts; the sentiment which could not fail to infix itself in the bosom of the youthful sculptor, when publicly called on to contribute to the immortal record of his master and instructor, will be indelible, and will preserve its efficacy undiminished through the whole course of his life.

By the institution of the Academy of Milan a wide field of competition is opened to

* Vide Academic Annals, published by authority of the Royal Academy, 1803.

artists of every kind, and rewards are liberally bestowed on professional eminence ; it does not, however, as in the foregoing instance, lead to any permanent establishment for successful art. In Spain and Germany, liberality and judgment appear to march hand in hand. In France, the numerous assemblage of schools, lyceums, and institutes, by which the arts are assisted, dazzles the view ; prizes are distributed to theoretic ingenuity and practical skill ; every nerve of thought, every faculty of talent is called into action ; yet, magnificent and high-sounding as the plans of encouragement are towards the artists, the last report of the class of the fine arts in the National Institute, on the question of the progress of the arts since the year 1789, seems to prove their project as yet occasional only, and immature *.

The following passage is selected from the

* At the same time that I make this remark, I feel it my duty to acknowledge, that the accounts of the general encouragement given to the arts in France, are very imperfectly transmitted to us.

report

report on architecture: “ We have now
 “ nothing but consolatory prospects; great
 “ and important repairs succeed each other.
 “ The first, that of the Luxemburg, is
 “ posterior to 1789; the monarchy had left
 “ that beautiful palace in ruins. The re-
 “ storation of this monument was com-
 “ menced by the Republic, and it is con-
 “ tinued with increased splendour by the
 “ talents of the accomplished architect (M.
 “ Chalgrin) who respects the glory of De-
 “ brosse.

“ The report which shall begin at the period
 “ when the present terminates, will do
 “ justice to the great encouragement given
 “ to sculpture. How splendid will that
 “ report be, if we may judge of it by the
 “ embellishments which Paris has received
 “ since the year 10! The noblest of them
 “ all will be the completion of the Louvre,
 “ the second appearance of which, in some
 “ measure, eclipses the admiration com-
 “ manded by the first.

“ The minister of the interior has assigned
 “ a spacious apartment in the Palace of the
 “ Arts,

“ Arts, to receive the precious collection of
“ the most beautiful antique architectural
“ ornaments, formed with so much care by
“ our colleague Dufourney, during a resi-
“ dence of thirteen years in Italy. This
“ unique collection will be devoted to the
“ purposes of study.”—*Report of the Pro-
ceedings of the Class of the Fine Arts of the
National Institute, during the year 11* *.

There is no reason for doubting the word of the reporter, that great projects are in contemplation, and great works in execution, and that the picture of the years immediately ensuing will be of the most brilliant hue; but at the end of these works and these schemes, as they are all temporary and insulated, new resources must be sought; and those resources must necessarily be subjected to the momentary disposition of the sovereign or the minister.

From the contemplation of other countries let us return to our own, and examine, *first*, what is in the power of England, with

* See Monthly Magazine, February 1805.

respect to the arts, from its political state ; *next*, what means derived from the patronage of public authority might furnish the best hopes of eventual success ; and *lastly*, in what manner an adequate plan could be conducted with the greatest facility.

First, as to the power of England from its political state :

Mr. Hume has delivered his opinion, that
 “ for the arts and sciences to arise at first
 “ among any people, it is necessary for that
 “ people to enjoy the blessings of a free state ;”
 a sentiment which if he did not borrow from Longinus, he had at least his authority for it :

“ ἡ δημοκρατία των μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν τιθηνός, ἢ
 “ μόνη χεδὸν καὶ συνήκμασαν οἱ περὶ λόγους δεινοὶ
 “ καὶ συναπέθανον ; Θρέψαι τε γὰρ, ἱκανὴ τὰ
 “ φρονήματα των μεγαλοφρόνων ἢ ἐλευθερία, καὶ
 “ ἐπελπίσαι καὶ ἅμα διωδεῖν τὸ πρόθυμον τῆς πρὸς
 “ ἀλλήλους ἔριδος καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ πρωτεῖα φιλοτι-
 “ μίας *.”

“ These

* “ Democracy is the nurse of great men ; almost
 “ with

“These noble plants,” adds Mr. Hume, “may be transplanted into any government; but,” he continues, “a republic is more favourable to the growth of the sciences, and a civilized monarchy to that of the polite arts.”

Mr. Hume, ever ingenious and discriminating, has raised an unquestionable series of argument, on the ground which he assumes as to the nature of the polite arts. Considered as mere instruments of luxury and pleasure, they certainly depend on complaisance and flattery for their exist-

“with her alone have fine writers flourished and died: ‘tis liberty that is formed to nourish the sentiments of great geniuses, to inspire them with hope, at the same time to forward the propensity of contest one with another, and the generous emulation of being the first.”

Longinus, sect. 44.

N. B. Whenever assertions of this kind, respecting the exclusive advantages of democracy, are found in ancient writers, it should always be recollected that they were ignorant of any mixed government like our own; England unites the advantages that may flow from democracy with those of monarchy.

ence,

ence, or at least for their continuance ; and complaisance and flattery are likely to prove more profitable engines in the presence of an absolute monarch, than before the throne of law and justice ; but it is evident that, in as much as concerns the Arts of Design, this ground is taken with the same confined view noticed in the preface, which brings into contemplation none but their inferior and more ordinary qualities ; a view, unfortunately, too frequent with the most eminent modern authors of our country, and, no doubt, to be chiefly attributed to the education of writers in institutions unconnected with the cultivation of those arts. Whenever the plastic art has been in question, it has, in consequence, become the topic of discussion to learned and ingenious men unacquainted with its real nature and complete powers.

Moreover, is not experience against Mr. Hume on this subject ? Did the court of Leo X. raise the arts to that high state of
moral

moral and religious dignity which they attained in the republics of Greece ?

With regard to poetry, if we judge from the three great examples of excellence in the highest class of that art, will not his assertion be found doubtful ? Do we know that Homer lived at court ? Was not the growth of Latin verse, whose splendour finally blazed in the *Æneid* of Virgil, matured under republican predominance* ? Did not Milton deck himself for immortality in the time of our commonwealth ?

Poetry, and with it the intellectual Arts of Form, considered as great moral agents, as partaking of the importance of historical

* Mr. Harris seems to be of this opinion. " So likewise Virgil, in the time of Octavius, wrote his *Æneid*, " and with Horace, Varius, and many other fine writers, " partook of his protection and royal munificence. But " then it must be remembered, that these men were bred " and educated in the principles of a free government ; it " was thence they derived that high and manly spirit " which made them the admiration of after ages."

Note in Hermes, book iii.

science,

science, do not depend on the breath of a courtier, on the smile or disdain of a favourite ; they stand engrafted in the stock of national dignity, and flourish secure from the influences of accidental ignorance or caprice. National patronage bestows on them a more durable glory ; the collective judgment of a people risen to greatness, will not suffer them to fluctuate with the favour of a few changeful and successively fleeting individuals.

But in whatever light we may choose to regard the arts, whether as the instruments of luxurious pleasure, or moral utility, it appears from Mr. Hume's theory, that England is favourable not only to their rise, but to their growth also ; in its democratic part it fosters their austere and useful qualities, in its monarchical their graces and delights.

It follows then, that it is not only natural that in such a state the arts should expect to attain their highest point of elevation, but that it is unbecoming the dignity of such a
state

state to suffer them to remain in that subordinate degree which subjects them to lose their nobler purposes;—the organs of pleasure only and the victims of caprice. England, as a country, is honoured by every enlightened mind which reflects its rays on the arts; but England, as a state, is disgraced as long as the arts are left to individual patronage, however illustrious.

To correspond, therefore, with these lofty expectations, it is requisite to consider, next, from what means the best hopes of eventual success may reasonably be derived under the supposed protection and influence of public authority.

It is evident that while the arts remain in their present undomesticated state, they can only continue to dissipate their vigour in unproductive struggles. Like youth, that wastes its genial bloom in devious excesses, prodigal of its blossoms, and shedding unreturned sweets, the support which they should bring to their country, and the honour they should add to her enlightened institutions,

tions, are forfeit and lost : like youth's, their dawning lustre flies by on hasty wings, its track is soon irrevertibly closed, and disappointment and remorse follow it in vain.

The prevention of this national loss can only be sought in such wise and providential care, united with permanent power, as having first ascertained the real importance of the plastic art, shall steadily continue to call forth its real uses*.

In examining the means essential to the prosecution of this important purpose, it will be requisite to draw aside the veil which prejudice has thrown peculiarly over this country in regard to the due encouragement and distinction of the plastic arts ; it is requisite to behold them as united with poetry and history, in all the important purposes of moral progress and delight, as principals in the class of those objects of ingenuous study

* The question may here be fairly asked, where shall this union of wisdom and power be found except in our legislature ?

which

which polish and humanize the manners, multiply the enjoyments, and improve the benevolence of nations.

In the arrangement of the various studies of youth in our universities, no place has hitherto been allotted to the Arts of Design. Whether any appointment was originally proposed or made for their cultivation, might be a subject of curious inquiry ; but, leaving that question for the present, it is beyond doubt, that whatever signs of favour they had experienced, were diligently obliterated at the Reformation ; and, while the useful service which a knowledge of music could render to ecclesiastical candidates probably caused the establishment of university degrees in that art, no pretensions were allowed to painting or sculpture, which might, at the least, prefer claims not inferior to music, in the scale of civilization. If our history at this period did not furnish us with these obvious causes, it would be very difficult to account, even plausibly, for the great distance at which the cultivation of
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the arts of painting and sculpture has been placed from that of poetry, music, and the sciences. They could hardly have been excluded from our universities as ignoble, since it could not have escaped the knowledge of those learned bodies, that they had in their favour the authority of Alexander, who ordained, that painting should have the first rank among the liberal arts, and that none but those of noble family should practise it. We might therefore, at the first glance, have been induced to suspect that our ancestors had not apprehended the mental rank which painting necessarily holds, from its influence over the mind, and that they had classed it either among the departments of commerce, or of mere mechanical industry. On this head the present day is not in doubt; the academic discourses of Reynolds have evinced, at once by argument and example, the degree of intellectual esteem to which painting may vindicate its claim.

Nothing can be more evident than the advantages which would accrue to the arts
by

by their admission into those venerable establishments. Whence could the mental nourishment, which has been stated as indispensably requisite, be so well supplied as from those diffusive fountains of knowledge? It is in those the painter should seek, as from those he might so justly hope to derive, the strength and sinews of his labours for future eminence. In those abodes of learning, the painter would acquire that general, comprehensive knowledge, which combines the powers of various branches of study in the service of a single one; by the aid of which the ambitious investigator of nature levies forces in the provinces of neighbouring allies, to conduct him to victory in his own. The regular instructions of a professor in painting, duly qualified for his office (and in such we are not deficient), would impress on the tender mind the nature and importance, and consequently the just object, of the art. The little conceits of sensitive ignorance, so often mistaken for genius, would sink in the tide of study; effective

effective energy would accompany the efforts of instructed talents, and genius would expand his wings, to soar with security through the regions of invention.

It needs no argument to prove how widely different a result must spring from a mind stored with all the treasures of learning which the universities spread forth to their pupils, or from the same mind boasting no other aid than that of devious application, and rich only in the stores of unembellished and uncultivated fancy.

Besides the essential advantages to be derived from regular instruction, additional ones must also be expected from the lofty emulation of spirit, which would be justly excited in the artist, in consequence of the footing on which he would perceive himself placed. He would find himself classed with those whose labours were in due time to maintain the honours of his country. If he should fail of rising to excellence by the proper cultivation of his talents, he would be left without a subterfuge for insufficiency,

ficiency, because he would have no plea to offer founded on the want of means or opportunity. Moreover, in consequence of the natural communication between young students, he would be exposed to the eyes and criticisms of those who had, by the same habitual channel, acquired just notions of the scope and nature of his art ; notions which, however singular the assertion may appear, are not now to be found (as has been before remarked) in a large proportion of those whose minds are, in other respects, highly cultivated by study and learning*.

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* With regard to this point, more could be said by painters than can, perhaps, be said without offence to those whom it is their interest and wish to please. It often creates astonishment in artists, who are apt to conceive that every kind of knowledge is bestowed by a public liberal education, to find scholars of the profoundest erudition in letters, very little better informed of the properties of painting than the idlest boy in an academy. That this is not owing to any want of capacity

The concession of these privileges would therefore operate to the advantage of all classes. It would render the youths of superior station more enlightened patrons of the artists, and stimulate the artists to be found worthy of enlightened patrons.

Were the plastic art thus placed in its real class, the production of its real uses

city to acquire knowledge, they evidently demonstrate by their great literary proficiency ; and it can only therefore be accounted for from the total exclusion of the study of the plastic arts from the schools in which that proficiency has been acquired.

I shall take the liberty to mention an anecdote to which I can myself bear witness. A poet of high name, and an ex-member of one of our universities, conversing with my father in his study, his eye was caught by a model made by Scheemaker, from the celebrated antique fragment of a statue commonly called the Torso of Michael Angelo. He asked what animal or other object it represented. My father modestly explained the subject of inquiry, and added, " If I, Sir, had asked such a question respecting any work of poetry, what opinion would you have entertained of a painter ?"

would soon follow. It would be found worthy to perpetuate the records of our country's greatness, to attend on its religion, and to enforce the perceptions of blessings derived from its laws : and for all these purposes it is plain that public authority could afford it ample and sufficient scope.

We come now to examine in what manner a plan adequate to the proposed end might be rendered most easy of execution.

A simple proposition shall here be offered, in which, it is believed, there is every appearance of obvious truth. An adequate plan of support to the arts must include these two measures :

First, A provision for the means of study and instruction of such young students as shall be elected to the profession of the arts.

Secondly, An ordinance of great national works, which shall be regularly progressive ; and to the execution of which honourable rewards shall be annexed.

The .

The most effectual methods of *maturer* instruction have been already hinted : the arrangements of such a plan would be easy. The appointment of a professor, with as many scholarships as may be esteemed requisite, would be all that is wanting. The students in painting would mix, in the general education, with those destined to other branches of learning, and enjoy individually the same advantages as others. Previous to this period of education, the means of elementary study and practice might be furnished at the Academy ; from whose schools, greatly enlarged beyond their present state, youths might be sent, as they are from other schools, to either of the universities, in order, by farther studies in their appropriate class, to acquire their respective professional degrees ; after which the provision already made by the Academy for their travels into Italy, might take effect, and would then bear the highest promise of utility.

It appears to have been an essential part of the plans of other countries, to form a

separate establishment for the education of painters, and to comprise in it such instruction merely as is primarily necessary for the practice of their art *. But, it must be recollected, no government, since the time of Pericles, has assumed the task of regulating the destiny of the intellectual arts, and fixing them in their highest and most salutary sphere. It is to be doubted if this can ever be effected by exclusive establishments for their cultivation : all arts and sciences, it has long since been observed, have a connexion and dependence on one another, and it is the communication of

* The methods adopted in our country are singularly different from these plans. Not only our arts are separated from the seats of learning, but all the supplies of methods tending towards their acquisition, instead of being united in any one establishment, are scattered among the various institutions, called the Royal Institution, the Royal Academy, the Museum, and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c. In addition to all which, a new one now makes its appearance, equally sanctioned by exalted patronage.

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their mutual lights that eminently tends to the perfection of all.

The other point for consideration is the direction of such public works as the fame and virtue of a nation may be said to demand ; and the regulation of rewards proper to be annexed to the execution of such important works.

What is to be offered on the former of these heads, is by this time sufficiently obvious : halls, churches, palaces, may, by the accord of the legislature, be rendered the receptacles of historic, religious, and moral records. The impartial decisions of wisdom and justice, the chaste symbols of evangelic faith, the valour of the hero, the firmness and integrity of the patriot, represented in impressive characters, may respectively find their appropriate abodes, and “our walls, like the inspired oaks of Dodona’s grove, will teach us history, morality, divinity*.”

* Richardson.

What can impress on an assembled people a more endearing image of their Sovereign, than to view him surrounded by the meritorious actions of his predecessors ? What can more endear a nation to themselves, than to behold the forms and exploits of those whose virtues have transmitted honour to them as an inheritance ? What more endear a people to its soil, its laws, its institutions, than the constant renewal to the sight, of those scenes, where freedom has been achieved, mental character vindicated, and social happiness established and secured ?

Does any one doubt what has here been said ? Let him figure to himself, that, when he enters the solemn cathedrals of London and Westminster, he beholds our blessed Saviour on the mountain, imparting his saving knowledge to the minds, or distributing bread to the wants, of the multitude ; when he enters the presence-chamber of his Sovereign's palace, that he meets the upright and philosophic Nassau, landing
to

to receive the sacred guardianship of English rights; that, in the senate, he sees the assembled Barons in the act of ascertaining those rights, and swearing their inviolable maintenance, or the pure and enlightened orators, the fence of whose lips no accents ever passed, save those of dauntless equanimity and truth; that, when he visits the halls of our city, he is accosted by men whose wisdom, whose philanthropy, whose counsels, whose arms, have adorned or maintained the state; that he meets a Locke or a Newton, a Howard or a Chatham, an Abercromby or a Nelson, devoting life to intellectual eminence, or prepared to render it a willing tribute to the triumphs of their country. What if he could indeed behold these glorious visions! Who could depart from such a spectacle, and not bear away a mind improved and strengthened in religious charity, loyalty, and patriotic zeal? But, if the painter perform well his task, the impression made by his art will be second only to that produced by the reality of the object.

It is almost needless to remark, that in England, if the high authority of the legislature should once give being and force to ordinances of this nature, the emulation of lesser public bodies, and of individuals, would soon render their effects diffusively beneficial. What hall would be vacant of such records of associated merit? What nobleman would not wish, amidst this blaze of public example, to enrol some generous act, some brave exploit, some deed of piety or wisdom performed by the founders of his own race and honours!

It is difficult to conceive what more powerful stimulants men can feel to virtuous and heroic conduct, than such continual remiscences of the merit of their predecessors.

It is of importance to observe, that for the adequate execution of such works, it is requisite that the highest talents should be drawn forth. The doors at which competition, like a hydra, would rush for entrance, must be strictly guarded. The trivial mockery
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of mean conceptions would pollute the sacred ground of national honour. But the difficulty of obtaining the prize would not deter aspiring genius from effort. The value of that must necessarily be enhanced, which will be bestowed on the worthiest only*.

* If the incitement of talents by such means should unexpectedly produce an excess of deserving competitors, an *after* selection, when the course of ten or twenty years should have ascertained the estimation of their works, might take place, and a situation of distinguished eminence be allotted to such performances as were pronounced honourable to the country.

It is to be observed that, in order to settle the claims of merit by the only standard which can ever be satisfactorily applied to arts and sciences, these judgments must be fixed by the decision of those educated in the proposed classes of art at the universities. Great objections, no doubt, rest on this point, from the nature of professional jealousy; but a greater mischief would be thus excluded, the interference of any other than professional interest.

How desirable would it be, and how advantageous to public convenience and honour, if the plans of all public works were settled by a criterion of the same kind! How often do we see edifices of great public moment left, without a question, to the most private, and sometimes almost invisible management!

It is sufficient that the reward be certain. This is a necessary point, in order to uphold the perseverance of struggling merit through a path beset with difficulties and surrounded by distracting allurements. The artist *must* surmount the one, and escape the others; he will triumph over both, if he can fix his eye on a meed of which successful toil cannot finally be deprived.

To sum up briefly the evidence which may be deduced from the investigation attempted in this chapter;

It has been stated, that the due direction of the arts of sculpture and painting to the paths which they ought to tread, and the just and permanent support which they ought to receive, are not the work of individuals, and can be hoped for from no authority less than legislative; and that, in order to effectuate any plan of raising the arts in this country to a height equal to the renown of former ages, and of rendering them the instruments of the highest national purposes, it is requisite to enable the student to prosecute
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his studies in the most extensive and effectual modes, to supply him with the most ample means of knowledge, and to affix a final reward to his labours, in employment and honour adequate to their merits. Without the first, the necessity of procuring a livelihood will always subject him to trivial interruptions of proper study; without the second his mind will be deficient in due expansion; and without the last, what can induce him to persevere in his arduous toil? To what purpose shall he struggle to ascend a steep and craggy summit, if, on gaining it, he fears it will present nothing but a barren prospect, and perhaps leave him no other resource than to dash himself precipitately down, and extinguish in obscurity at once his ardour and his hope!

PART II.

*Of the Establishment, Design, and Progress
of the Royal Academy of Arts;
And of its Annual Exhibitions.*

CHAP. I.
OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

To softer prospects turn we now the view,
To laurel'd science, arts, and public works,
That lend my finish'd fabric comely pride,
Grandeur and grace.

THOMSON'S LIBERTY.

THE institution of the Royal Academy was the first measure of high authority, which tended to rescue the Arts of Design in England from their almost proscribed state, from the ignominy of total public neglect. During the reigns of two monarchs, of a name now so justly endeared to us, the glorious task of giving security to our constitutional liberties, seems to have absorbed all

all other exertions, and consequently we discover in them few symptoms of sensibility towards the refinement of the arts. The flame of national patronage had been lighted in the reign of Anne; she continued the protection of royal favour to Sir Christopher Wren, and adorned the cupola of the cathedral of London with the pencil of Thornhill.—If it may not be considered as important, it is yet curious to remark, that the restriction of the art of painting, and its liberation, should have been the acts of female Sovereigns.—But as if the patronage of Anne had been premature, during the reigns that followed an ungenial damp arose, like vapours that repel an untimely spring, and expanding its chilly influence, soon wrapped the arts in clouds of darkness. Happily, that liberty whose altar had been consecrated by virtuous struggles, however disdainful she then appeared of the softer blandishments of intellectual arts, cherished the spirit which forbids ardour to be extinguished, and renders perseverance inexpugnable.

Neglect

Neglect, although it might mortify, did not subdue the British artist; although the curfew was tolled in the regions of Painting, the painters watched the covered embers, and reverencing their fading lustre like the expiring glow of vestal fire, preserved them, pure and unimpaired, to meet the returning breath of happier hours.

When the artists found that expectation offered no prospect, and patience drew forth no hope, they assembled in an almost unnoticed society for the renovation of the drooping arts. They endeavoured to unite their individual forces, in order to give weight to their movements; and when they began to gather assurance that their Sovereign's "bounty would not shame the giver," they offered themselves to the liberality and protection of our gracious Monarch. From this union in a common cause, arose the institution of the Royal Academy.

Full of confidence in their native powers, but reduced to the lowest ebb of their fortunes, the artists of *St. Martin's Lane*;

*Lane**, remind us of the account given by Virgil, in his seventh book of the *Æneid*, when the long persecuted followers of *Æneas* reached the shores destined to be the seat of their future greatness:

“ Heus! etiam mensas consumimus?——
 “ ——ea vox audita laborum
 “ Prima tulit finem, primamque loquentis ab ore
 “ Eripuit pater, ac stupefactus numine pressit.
 “ Continuò, Salve fatis mihi debita Tellus,
 “ Vósque, ait, ô fidi Trojæ salvet Penates.
 “ ——genitor mihi talia, namque
 “ (Nunc repeto) Anchises fatorum arcana reliquit:
 “ Cùm te, nate, fames——
 “ Accisis coget dapibus consumere mensas;
 “ TUM SPERARE DOMOS DEFESSUS †.”

* The street in which the Society of Artists assembled.

† “ See we devour the plates on which we fed!
 “ *Æneas* took the word and thus replies:
 “ (Confessing Fate with wonder in his eyes)
 “ All hail, O Earth! all hail my household Gods!
 “ Behold the destin’d place of your abodes!”

Dryden's Translation.

Reynolds

Reynolds was at hand (the *Æneas* of the hour) to catch the gleam of dawning hope, and with the skilful talents of a leader, and the enthusiasm of genius, he cherished and diffused its invigorating warmth. “ There
“ have been times,” says he, in his discourse on the opening of the Royal Academy *,
“ when even the influence of Majesty would
“ have been ineffectual ; and it is pleasing
“ to reflect that we are thus embodied,
“ when every circumstance seems to con-
“ cur from which honour and prosperity
“ can probably arise. There are at this time
“ a greater number of excellent artists than
“ were ever known before at one period in
“ this nation ; there is a general desire
“ among our nobility to be distinguished as
“ lovers and judges of the arts ; there is a
“ greater superfluity of wealth among the
“ people to reward the professors ; and above
“ all, we are patronized by a MONARCH,
“ who, knowing the value of science and

* January 2, 1769.

“ of elegance, thinks every art worthy of
“ his notice that tends to soften and hu-
“ manize the mind.”

The Royal Academy has a twofold capacity ; it is, *first*, an assemblage of the most eminent professors of the Arts of Design, for the purpose of giving improvement and celebrity to an English school ; and, *secondly*, a guardian of the rising candidates for eminence in the paths to which that school directs them.

The degree of rank which it assumed in the first of these points, we who are now living are able to ascertain. Besides the various merits of its other members, the president (Sir J. Reynolds) was a man so splendid in his labours, and so admirable in his conduct, that his chair can rarely be filled by one so variously calculated to raise a public institution to celebrity. In the practice of his art inexorably firm ; in his general and ex-professional manners yielding and meek ; by the commanding powers of the former, and the attractive sweetness of
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the latter, he drew around him a circle of men of the highest distinction in every class. Those who loved him for “arts that taught themselves to rise,” rendered him an almost implicit deference; and those of the highest and most illustrious nobility met him with a species of homage, which, however it might flow from condescension, they were sensible they seldom offered to rank alone.

In its second department, the History of the Academy is intimately connected with the view of necessary patronage, which formed the subject of the preceding chapter.

The design of the Royal Academy has been already described, viz. that of instructing its pupils in proper methods, by the aid of which they may aspire to excellence in the highest departments of art, and of assisting their progress to the utmost. Here is held forth a hope, authorized by the high sanction of his Majesty's name; in the fulfilment of which, regarded in a national view, not only the idea of liberality, but even the sense of common justice is implicated.

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To educate youths in an academy, and to leave them, when educated, without employment adequate to the purposes of their education, would be a system too incongruous for remark. The Academy, in this latter division of its faculties, can properly be esteemed as the nurse only of painting; it fosters the infant, and supplies him with strength to run the race of contest; but should no farther care be taken to maintain the honour of his course, should no award of triumph await the victor, the primary establishment of an academy might appear to have done little else than create delusive prospects, and to have excited hope only to sharpen the sting of disappointment.

It may not be improper to notice a mistaken idea which is said to have prevailed till very lately, with respect to the supplies by which this institution has been maintained. Many have entertained a persuasion that, long after its foundation, it continued to derive its whole support from the bounty
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of the Sovereign, defraying its expenditure and preventing its wants; and they regarded every member of the Academy as a person receiving his reward from the royal purse, with the comfortable additional distribution, among the whole body, of whatever sums were annually derived from the Exhibitions*. But how different is the view presented to our minds, when we read the account of this establishment lately given by one of these very members!

After mentioning that the Academy, at its formation, “ was fortunate enough to
“ obtain the countenance and high sanc-
“ tion of his Majesty, and to be assisted
“ in its first years by his beneficence.”

* This conception of the state of the Academy, if it may have deprived its members of the honourable meed really due to their independent spirit and perseverance, is, in another light, highly flattering to them, as it proves the public sentiment of what *might*, without injustice, be regarded as the reward of their exertions. The opinion formed by persons unacquainted with facts, is always founded on their idea of what *should be*, and what they consequently imagine *is* the case.

“ This establishment,” continues the author, “ which ought to be national and
“ comprehensive, which ought to include
“ within its walls every thing that is essen-
“ tial, expedient, or inviting to the pro-
“ gress of the student, which should rest
“ on a foundation worthy of the freest,
“ the richest, the most powerful, and the
“ most generous people on earth, and
“ which, by foreigners, is supposed to be
“ a splendid example of public munificence,
“ derives its income from the disinterested
“ labours of artists, possesses not a single
“ original example of the old masters ; and,
“ excepting the advantage of apartments at
“ Somerset-Place, has not, for many years,
“ received the smallest assistance from the
“ state *.”

After reading such a statement, we naturally feel ourselves disposed to regard with some degree of admiration the unabating

* Notes to Rhymes on Art, or the Remembrance of a Painter, by M. A. Shee, R. A.

struggle of self-supported talents, which the public has witnessed in the progress of this institution *. Nor can we withhold a portion of astonishment, on reflecting that the enlightened views and benevolent dispositions of the Sovereign, towards an institution which has excited so much attention during the course of thirty-seven years, should never yet have been seconded by any one of his numerous successive administrations. The Royal Academy of England, which has, by the exertions of individuals, drawn forth the applause of every other nation, still remains, as it were, unsanctioned by its own; a private society, honoured, patronized, adopted by the Sovereign, but not in any

* In the discourse of Sir J. Reynolds, already mentioned, he expresses his hope, that the *dignity of the dying art* (as expressed by Pliny) may be revived under the reign of George III. Painters yet use the same expression with regard to the actual state of their art; a proof that, nevertheless, it is not yet extinct.

degree connected with the great civil institutions of England*.

In what has here been observed, will be found the causes of the limited scale on which the Royal Academy has been hitherto arranged. In the first formation of its rules, it is not improbable that many parts of its fabric were imitated from the academy of St. Petersburg, which had, a few years before, received its sanction from the powerful genius of the Empress Catherine. A great similarity is discernible in its project, but the project was *here* contracted to little more than the superior regulations of a friendly professional society. Charity towards the distresses of decayed or unsupported artists, constitutes a feature, not less important than honourable, of its construction. To supply the funds requisite for this purpose, a part

* The British Institution, in its recent establishment, liberally and judiciously blends the interests of the Royal Academy with its own. It is by such progressive steps, that the arts may at length be brought forward to due exertions.

of the profits of the annual Exhibitions were, and still are, accumulated; and the bounty of these disinterested labourers is as open and liberal as their task is meritorious.

One circumstance relative to the scale of our academic establishment, is too remarkable to have escaped public observation. In the distribution of *Professorships* (to which offices is annexed the duty of reading public lectures to the pupils of the Academy), there is no appointment in *Sculpture*. How confined soever it was thought fit, at the first institution, to render the list of salaried offices (a caution fortunately no longer requisite in the same degree), it is natural to imagine that this distinct and eminent branch of the arts, being one of the three which gave the title to the Academy, would have been thought worthy the endowment of a school of especial instruction*.

But

* The Royal Academy also elects a limited number of *Engravers* as associate members; but, neither, is there any

But inadequate and contracted as the scheme of the Royal Academy may appear by a comparison with others designed to forward a similar purpose, its views having been authorized by the sanction of the Sovereign's name and promised aid, the obligations into which it has entered as the deposit and guardian of the plastic flame, assume an air of so considerable importance, that they justly become an object of public concern ; and our duty leads us to inquire how far the institution has corresponded to its professional promises, how far it has diffused around it the light of instruction and science.

By the rules of the institution, the Academy binds itself to forward the advancement of the arts in our country, by diligently supplying instruction to young

provision in the Academy for instruction in Engraving, a branch of art which, if it may not rank with the inventive genius of the first *three*, is so evidently instrumental to the dissemination of their fame, that its cultivation cannot but be of the highest importance to them.

students

students in various specified branches; by affording to all deserving artists an opportunity of displaying their talents to the public in the annual Exhibition; and by sending abroad, and maintaining for a fixed period, the students of highest promise in its schools. It is natural to conclude, that men, themselves feeling the want of generous efforts for their support and progress, would not be neglectful of contributing all the assistance they were enabled to bestow, towards the general advancement of the design; and, accordingly, we find, that in the long course of this establishment, very few omissions of its public duty have occurred*.

If

* Besides the regular schools of the Plaster and Living Models, there are four active Professorships in the Royal Academy, viz. of Painting, Anatomy, Architecture, and Perspective. The Professors are charged to deliver six lectures every year, in their respective provinces. In the two former of these departments the lectures have been diligently continued, with few (merely unavoidable) interruptions; in the last they have been wholly omitted,

If we compute in one amount all that may be classed under the head of academic exertions, during the whole of its progress, the result will appear highly satisfactory and honourable. Besides the regular performance of the internal duties of the schools, the distribution of premiums, and the constancy of the Exhibitions (which will be spoken

and private tuition has been substituted; there is at present no Professor in Perspective. In Architecture the lectures also continued regularly for a long period: the distinguished abilities of the late professor leave it to be regretted, that other public duties deprived the Academy of the advantages his instructions would have afforded to its pupils.

The offices of *Chaplain to the Royal Academy*, of *Professors of History and Ancient Literature*, and of *Secretary for Foreign Correspondence*, are honorary, and have been annexed to the Academy since its first arrangements.

The performance of the obligation of the Academy respecting the maintenance of three young students in Italy, has been obstructed by the present insecure state of the Continent.

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of in the next chapter), and besides the various instruction which the science, ingenuity, and taste of the Professors have largely contributed to diffuse, it is not to be forgotten that the discourses of Reynolds were delivered within the walls of this establishment. Were the public indebted to the Academy for this circumstance alone, the advantage derived from its institution would yet be of the highest importance. The excellence of those discourses did not consist in conveying any minute information to the pupils relative to the practical part of their art, but they were addressed to the *ambition* of the students, they awakened desire, and shewed the gates of excellence and fame.

Nor were their effects limited to the delight and improvement of the students of the Academy: in the comprehensive and philosophic views which they afforded to all, they demonstrated the connexion of a painter's studies with all other sources of intellectual pleasure; they recalled the arts to

the just estimation in which they had formerly stood ; and they may be considered as having been the first serviceable engines in expanding the national mind towards the full perception of graphic excellence.

Amidst the numerous instances of zeal in the administration of the Academy, some deviations, and partial neglect, have crept in upon its rules, and still prevail, but they are of such a nature as easily to admit of reform. These deficiencies, or imperfections, arise from the confined and private nature of the institution, and would infallibly be remedied if it were connected with other objects of public regulation*. A national superintendence would, not improbably, enlarge the

* One passage in Mr. Shee's account of the Academy, deserves particular notice ; this is, the just regret he expresses at the want of original examples of the great masters of the art of painting. It appears to be within the views of the British Institution to supply this deficiency, and it is to be hoped that in the collection they shall form, the works of English artists of established fame will not be excluded.

scale of instruction, and place within the reach of the English artist, at least as many advantages as those offered by the institutions of St. Petersburg, Milan, Paris, Vienna, or Madrid.

The academy of St. PETERSBURG is a vast establishment, comprehending the entire education of youths selected for the cultivation of the arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, from a very early stage of childhood to their final establishment in those branches of art for which they have respectively appeared best qualified. Besides a general superintending care of their health and social habits, the institution embraces every branch of instruction, religious, moral, and professional; including in the last term general erudition as well as especial practice of the Arts of Design. A more complete academic system it would be difficult to form, and it is crowned by the provisions made for the students on their outset in the public practice of their profession.

The Establishment of MILAN is conspi-

cuous for the extensive field which it opens to youthful talents, and for the large scale on which it at once provides instruction, and rewards the instructors. There are no less than eight active professors of various divisions of art, attached to an equal number of schools, all of which (besides the galleries of pictures and statues) are amply furnished with appropriate objects and materials of study. It rewards the theoretic as well as the practical teacher, and is itself a source and supply of national works.

The scheme of this institution is professedly the same as that of PARIS;—but the consideration of the patronage of arts in France will be better undertaken at a future period, when we may have more adequate means of ascertaining its actual state.

In the accuracy and regularity of the methods of study adopted in the academy of VIENNA, the indefatigable genius of the nation is honourably displayed. If excellence be ever attainable by study and by regular cultivation of talent, it may justly
be

be hoped from the judicious order and gradual progress in which youth is there led forward, from the simplest rudiments of instruction to the full exertion of duly organized powers.

The institution of the Academy of St. Ferdinand, in MADRID, is marked with the polite magnificence which characterizes the conduct of the Spanish nation. The arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, are denominated the THREE NOBLE ARTS; the academicians have many of the privileges of nobility; the academy itself has those of the Sovereign's palace. The various schools are liberally endowed and excellently arranged; and the collections of pictures and casts, very far exceed those of which any other public body in Europe is possessed*.

It

* The reader is referred to the ACADEMIC ANNALS published by the Royal Academy. I wish I were able to make this statement of Foreign Academies more complete. In my department at the Academy, I have used no little diligence to procure accounts from every great Academy

It is on the most extensive foundations of knowledge that the expanding structure of the arts may be expected to arise, that it may erect its lofty columns to the sky, and “glitter from afar.” Yet this is not all that is wanting. The vigilance of the state must be at all times active to discriminate and reward, to prevent torpor from stealing over uniformity, and to keep the flame of genius ever “tremblingly alive.”

Academy in Europe, of its respective state of art, but except in the instances above-mentioned, I have not yet been able to obtain them.

Some ingenious objections have lately been urged by a writer of much erudition and pleasantry, against the inefficacy and consequent absurdity of academic institutions ; but (if wit, like poetry, did not dispense with reply) it may be answered, as I have before remarked, that the same objections would be of equal force against all colleges of instruction. The genius of classic learning, of mathematics, of poetry, is no more born within the walls of an university, than that of painting in an academy ; but it is requisite to provide food for the infancy of both. I am very ready to agree, that an academy sometimes supplies very insufficient nutriment.

The

The Royal Academy of England is, with regard to the Arts of Design, the first, and consequently the most subordinate, step in the career of national refinement, but it is the proper link which unites the progress of the arts with the greatness of the nation.

CHAP. II.

OF THE ANNUAL EXHIBITION
AT SOMERSET-HOUSE.

While Fame is young, too weak to fly away,
Envy pursues her, like some bird of prey;
But once on wing, then all the dangers cease,
Envy herself is glad to be at peace.

D. OF BUCKINGHAM.

THE public Exhibition of the works of artists, is a mode of appeal to the world which seems to be sanctioned by the customs of all ages. Pliny, speaking of Apelles, says,
“ Idem perfectâ opera proponebat in per-
“ gulâ transeuntibus, atque post ipsam ta-
“ bulam latens, vitia quæ notarentur au-
“ scultabat,

“ scultabat, vulgum diligentiores judicem
 “ quam se præferens.”

To court investigation, and to seek fame through the discussion of public-sentiment, is the object of these Exhibitions*. The artist, immured within his silent dwelling, and absorbed in solitary thought, perceives that he cannot, himself, justly appreciate the fruits of his labours: the voice of admiring friends bears too evident marks of partiality to be wholly satisfactory: he pants for more unquestioned triumph, and longs to expose the offspring of his conception to the wide and searching atmosphere of public opinion.

But the gratification of an ambitious individual, although it be thus the object first in order, soon ceases to be the first in importance. The public derive from it an extensive benefit, which they could not so easily and so effectually acquire by any

* I have seen pictures hung up to public view under the portico of the Pantheon at Rome.

other means, namely, the exercise and improvement of their own powers of refinement and taste. It is chiefly on this ground that exhibitions, such as they are now established in most of the academies in Europe, lay claim to national respect. In England, they have greatly contributed to ripen the public judgment on all points of art, and appear to have had one very salutary consequence, that of diffusing a general desire (now first beginning to assume form and substance, and mixing with the wishes of the artists) to see the arts employed in a manner more worthy of their capacity and extensive powers. For it must be observed, that unless the objects exhibited be found adequate to the previous state of mind and consequent expectation of the beholder, little else than discontent can be the result; instead of pleasure smiling in the eye, and pride mantling to the heart, the weapons of critical animadversion will soon sparkle in the hands of many who are bidden to the feast.

This statement will probably suggest the
cause

cause of that fastidious sentiment so frequently displaying itself in the Exhibition-room of Somerset-House. Since the commencement of those Exhibitions, an awakened public has formed higher conceptions of art, to which the *class* of works generally exhibited is not now found to correspond.

It has been sufficiently shewn, that this disappointment arises, not from the want of zeal in the artist, but from the want of a proportionate combination of other sources of national progress. Men of reflecting minds will, therefore, frequently look round on that splendid magazine with regret; but it will be with the utmost caution that they will utter sentiments of condemnation on the artificers. Those who suffer such sentiments to transpire can hardly be aware, that, in the contempt and disregard which they affect for the efforts of the artists, they condemn and disregard themselves;—what the artists are as individuals in a professional view, they themselves are in a national one;
they

they contemplate in the Exhibition a trial of national ability and national character, wherein, if they perceive nothing but discomfiture, they must be content to think that endowments probably equal, perhaps superior, to their own, are either found unequal to the task of intellectual art, or are baffled and languid for want of due direction or adequate support; in either of which predicaments the general character of the nation cannot but be materially involved.

In the outset of the Exhibitions at Somerset-House, so slender was the state of general information on the subject of the plastic arts, that the very nature of the design appeared to be wholly misunderstood. Criticism and satire sallied forth against the exhibitors; pourtraying them not as peaceful cultivators of arts, whose province it is to "soften the manners and expand the mind," but, almost, as savage and rapacious banditti, from whose inroads it required the combined strength and knowledge of society to guard a suffering public. Scarcely was there a
journalist

journalist who did not put on Mambrino's helmet on this doughty occasion. In the course of the long period during which the Exhibitions have been continued, they have gradually induced a relish, and a juster appreciation, of the merits of the artists ; if the fervor of criticism has not abated, its rancour, at least, has greatly subsided, probably in proportion as its views of the arts have become more discriminate ; and this circumstance may be adduced as one among many proofs, of the tendency of the arts to humanize the manners of society.

The lustre and renown of the English Exhibition was long maintained by the inimitable labours of Reynolds, with the additional force of Wilson in its early period, and with the occasional aid of Gainsborough ; names which will go down to posterity with the most admired and celebrated of the world. The death of the first of these seemed to diffuse a momentary torpor over the provinces of the arts, and the Exhibitions wore a cold and lifeless hue. That of 1800
was

was the first in which the energies of the remaining artists appeared to revive, and vindicate to their own account, the meed which that great professor had held without a contest. The influence of his *manner* also began to subside, and the various talents of youthful artists were no longer confounded in the desire of attaining a partial resemblance of his mode of practice. At that moment the exertions of the painters may be considered as forming a new epoch in our Exhibitions.

The prevailing character of English art, as presented in an Exhibition, is boldness and force of colour, and of light and shade; and richness of effect. Expression of feature is always aimed at, and sometimes given. In *drawing*, more care is used to avoid palpable defect, than labour to acquire praise: it is often academic, sometimes learned, rarely comprehensive and characteristic. Composition (with some few powerful exceptions) is in general vague and desultory, sometimes correct, often graceful and pleasing. In the aggregate appearance of the Exhibition there
is

is greater vivacity than correctness. Our painting is like our drama, libertine in method and combination, but animated and forcible in effect *.

The neglect of due restriction in the number or degree of works admitted into the Exhibition, has been thought dangerous to the credit of national taste ; but in the view already taken of the academic institution, as intended to assist not the merits only,

* It was remarked of our Exhibitions, a few years since, by a French painter of no inferior merit †, that he found the English less grounded in the *grammar* of their art, and less regular in its conduct, than his own nation ; yet that he could not but feel at the same time something more interesting and striking in their pictures than in those of France.

It is natural, therefore, to hope, that if nature has furnished so strong a ground-work, cultivation and skill would perfect the fabric. But the influence of circumstances is wanting. If occasion call for exertions of a higher kind, there is no ground for thinking that they will not be made.

† M. Danloux, who painted a picture (which was exhibited) of a Vestal condemned to die in imprisonment.

but

but also the wants of artists, it would be difficult to draw the line of admission with severity.

In estimating the value of artists, as they present themselves in an annual Exhibition, every candid mind will hold a very different criterion from that which is justly applied on viewing the cabinets and other collections of sovereigns and nobles. The former contains their works casually displayed according to the circumstances of the passing moment; the latter are the result of a painful and mature selection, through a length of years, from the happiest moments of the painter's life. An Exhibition contributes to a painter's honour little more than an editor does to that of an author, when, roused by public admiration of some favourite work, he brings together fragments which the author's *maturer* judgment had concealed from sight, or his *final* wishes consigned to the fire. Yet this circumstance affords no argument against the custom of frequent Exhibitions. The defects, as well as the excellencies,
of

of *living* genius are the concern of the public: in the moments of actual exertion, *all that is done* is the due object of its attention: when time has induced that comparative appreciation which fixes the *value* of what is done, suppression, however foreign to the practice of these curious, inquiring days, would be one of the most useful duties that could be performed*.

It would be no depreciation, therefore, of an annual Exhibition, if it could be proved that it would not, even by selection, form a satisfactory gallery for a connoisseur, since it is the promiscuous gathering of one time and one school only, instead of the cream and, as it were, the distillation, of many.

With regard to the defects visible in a great number of the works annually exhibited

* Instead of increasing the loads that encumber our galleries under the authority of established names, the removal of the most defective parts which names alone have sanctioned, would be *comparatively* a blessing to the studios in art.

in England, it may probably be with truth asserted, that no *one* time or school has existed, which could have produced an Exhibition so numerous as ours, without likewise admitting pictures of very inferior merit. Indeed, where is the cabinet or gallery, however carefully chosen or fastidiously revised, which, bating the prejudice of blind and ignorant admiration, does not exhibit many pictures of merely nugatory value?

It would be an invidious task, to endeavour to eradicate a prejudice which appears occasionally to be the

“*Mentis gratissimus error,*”

or to destroy the exquisite satisfaction with which the collector wraps himself in his gallery, and contemplates the unmixed honours of foreign countries—unmixed, except with the rubbish of the same countries. We may smile with complacence on his enjoyments while he rests contented in them, but it is surely lamentable to all but the happy dreamer, when he extends his pleasures to the

the sacrifice of coteremporary merit ; when we behold a mind fearful of admitting any suggestion of the attainments of living artists, and its avenues, in a manner, blocked up even against an *inclination* to believe the honours of our native country.

To men of this description it would be as painful as useless, to hear that a Reynolds sometimes equalled, and sometimes surpassed, many of their favourite specimens of

“ ————Their lov'd Guido's air,

“ Paulo's free stroke,” &c.

and that if English painters have not yet risen to match the awful names of the few who stand illustrious exemplars of art, we are yet little in dread of comparison with the rest. But a collector, of the class above-mentioned, looks for beauties only in the works of the old and foreign masters ; and, with less of liberal benevolence, appears too often on the watch for defects only in those of the moderns in his own country. In an old picture any single beauty is sufficient to ensure its title to admiration, and its admission into the cabinet of this man of taste ; in a modern

one any single fault is equally potent to its condemnation and exclusion.

Happily we have in this country many instances of connoisseurs whose minds are open to every generous sentiment respecting our artists, and to the just appreciation of their works*. Yet candour will not reject one

* Enlightened characters of this description, are probably now more in number than could be met with some years ago. On perusal of the following passage in the *Analysis of Beauty*, one can hardly refrain from smiling at the terms in which the admirable, but indignant, painter describes those “who take the infectious turn of a connoisseur:” “The reason why gentlemen who have been inquisitive after knowledge in pictures, have their eyes less qualified for our purpose than others, is, because their thoughts have been entirely and continually employed and encumbered with considering and retaining the various *manners* in which the pictures are painted, the histories, names and characters of the masters, together with many other little circumstances belonging to the mechanical part of the art; and little or no time has been given for perfecting the ideas they ought to have in their minds of the objects themselves in nature; for by having thus
“ espoused

one obvious reflection, regarding the comparative estimation of the works of other schools and of our own. In the pictures of foreign and celebrated masters, whatever peculiarities are discernible in style or execution, they are, from the immemorial customs of *virtu*, implicitly set down in the catalogue of the painter's excellencies, and considered as unquestionable indications of superior genius. In the works of our own artists, all such peculiarities are censured as *manner*, and are consequently set down in the account as so many defects. That these peculiarities constitute what is called manner, is unquestionable in both instances, and the most common analogous observation will prove, that manner is at all times a *draw-back* on

“ espoused and adopted their first notions from nothing
 “ but *imitations*, and becoming too often as bigotted to
 “ their faults as their beauties, they at length, in a man-
 “ ner, totally neglect, or at least disregard, the works
 “ of nature, merely because they do not tally with what
 “ their minds are so strongly prepossessed with.”

excellence *; yet it is this defect which adds to devotion on one side, and to supercilious coldness on the other. To speak fairly, there is but one description of virtuosi, in whom this conduct is deserving of indulgence, namely, in those who possess no other method of distinguishing and ascertaining the performances of different artists.

To recognize the deficiencies annexed to excellence, is within the power of those who cannot reach to the perception of excellence

* “What are all the *manners*, as they are called, of even the greatest masters, which are known to differ so much from one another, and all of them from nature, but so many strong proofs of their inviolable attachment to falsehood, converted into established truth in their own eyes by self-opinion?”

Hogarth, Introduction to Analysis of Beauty.

There is an asperity in this remark which nearly outweighs its acuteness. Manner is the inevitable medium of all human communication; it is native in us, inwoven in our constitution, and peculiar in each individual; it may often deserve our pity, but can only challenge our anger, when, like a coxcomb enamoured of his own ordinary person, the painter's self-indulgence displays his imperfections by way of grace, and mistakes defect for beauty.

itself.

itself. Men know the sun by his spots, who could not endure to look on his fires. We are all made by nature adequate judges of one another's defects: accurately to discriminate, to see, and, most of all, to feel, what is good in the efforts of genius and skill, as it is the highest, so it is the most difficult attainment of study and criticism.

The Exhibitions of this country have presented to the public many works of excellence. The *Count Ugolino*, by Reynolds, the *Niobe*, by Wilson, the *Shepherd's Boy*, by Gainsborough, the *Mount Vesuvius*, by Wright, stand exempt from competition in their respective kinds; and how many more admirable works by those artists, how many by others still living, will the reader's recollection supply!

Could a gallery be formed from our Exhibitions, by a selection which should place in it the pictures just now mentioned, and such others as have been alluded to, might it not boldly aspire to comparison with many celebrated assemblages of the works of Caracci, Domenichino, Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Pous-

sin, Claude, and Ruysdael? and securely bid defiance to all the Denners, Scalckens, Fettis, Seranis, Brughels, Cignanis, Vanderneers, Gelligs, Gemignanos, and the whole tedious catalogue of unimportant names?

Is there a fear of thinking, or hesitation in daring to suppose, that our painters are equal to artists who are talked of with so much pomp *by auctioneers**?

That the regard of the public has been so long withheld from the plastic art in England, is a circumstance which may prove eventually favourable to its solid establishment. The zeal of the artists, so long destitute of individual protection, will seek a more enlarged patronage; and thus the slowest rise of the arts will be the most firm and stable.

* Fortunately for the professors of *drawing*, there are no very great collections by the hands of foreign masters; and it is singularly deserving of observation, that perhaps from that very cause, the public are not afraid to bestow the just praises and prices, on works of this description.

PART III.

*On the Powers of English Genius ;
conducive to Excellence in the Arts.*

CHAP. I.

OF THE GENIUS, OR NATURAL DISPOSITION
OF THE ENGLISH, WITH RESPECT TO
THE ARTS OF DESIGN.

—————Naturâ sublimis et acer,
Et spirat *graphicum* satis.

IT has been, and yet remains, a theme of triumph in the mouths of other nations, that England has not been able to exhibit any incontestable proofs of powers adequate to what has been elsewhere displayed in the acquirements, talents, or *genius* of painting. Whether this be, or be not, a fact admitting of demonstration, will be hereafter examined. But as if the assertion of presumed facts

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were

were not sufficient to satisfy exultation, it has been vaguely said, and learnedly maintained by physical criticism, that the national intellect of the English *is not disposed* to eminence in the plastic arts; and a conclusion has thence been drawn, that all attempts to cultivate them, and all hopes to court them, must necessarily be superfluous, and terminate in despair.

Before we bow to so tremendous a decision, let us be allowed to consider the grounds on which this assertion is made, and the authority on which it rests. This will most effectually be accomplished by ascertaining as accurately as possible, *first*, the meaning of what is usually termed genius; *next*, its nature and relations in respect of painting; and, *lastly*, the degree of credit due to those ingenious critics who have so triumphantly brandished their system before our eyes.

SECT. I.

Of Genius.

As there is scarcely any term in our language which has been the subject of more various definitions, so there is no real faculty of the mind, which has been more variously accounted for, than that collective power, or that eminence, which (in what manner soever defined) has been allowed by universal consent to be implied in the word GENIUS.

In considering it as a term, or expression of speech, we must naturally look for its interpretation to the language whence it has devolved to us.

- “ Cur alter fratrum cessare, et ludere, et ungi
- “ Præferat Herodis Palmetis pinguibus ; alter
- “ Dives et importunus, ad umbram lucis ab ortu
- “ Silvestrem flammis et ferro mitiget agrum,
- “ Scit GENIUS, natale comes qui temperat astrum,
- “ Naturæ deus humanæ, mortalis in unum—
- “ Quodque caput, vultu mutabilis, albus et ater.”

Horat. Epist. ii. l. 2.

Here

Here we evidently find genius, mythologically drest indeed, but meaning little or nothing else than the *Indoles*, or natural disposition, which inclines every individual to one particular pursuit, or choice in life, more than to another. Other passages of similar authority, will, no doubt, occur to the classical reader.

The word *genio*, in Italian (the legitimate heir of the Latin tongue), possesses the meaning here attributed to it; as may be seen in p. 4, of the *Dialoghi sopra le Tre Arti di Disegno**. In this its proper sense, we also use it in our own

* “In tutte due queste cose trovo molto da ridire, Signor Carlo. La prima è, che voi forse per vostra cortesia, mi mettiате nel numero degl' intendenti, quando io semplicemente da giovanetto per pochi anni hò atteso a disegnare; e ciò anche per un sopra più, e per mero spasso; e poi gettato ogni cosa in un canto, non ci hò mai più neppur per ombra pensato. Nè mi è rimasto altro, che un fortissimo genio, il quale da primo mi fece attendere per quel poco di tempo al disegno, &c.”

language,

language, as when we say, “ the genius of a country, or of a language.”

The English word *genius*, therefore, when used independently, may be regarded as an abstract term arbitrarily formed, to express the combination of all various propensities of genius, as the word *man* includes the idea of all various men ; and thence, farther, as we apply the word *man* to distinction or pre-eminence among human creatures (because combining the most excellent properties of the whole race) *e. g.* as we say, “ Such an one is *truly a man*, such an one is *a man* ;” so we apply the word *genius* to the peculiar pre-eminence of that combination in a single instance among all others ; and thus we arrive at saying in general terms, “ Such a man has *a genius*.”

Let us next consider genius as a faculty of the mind ; in which point the solution is necessarily more difficult, as the subject is more occult, and the research more intricate.

By the vulgar (and what class of men
does

does not that term occasionally comprehend ?) genius has been considered as a kind of magic, or preternatural inspiration ; as a felicity of endowment, which precluded all labour, cleared away every obstacle by a single breath or glance, and, to attain, required only to be directed*. To have a genius was accounted similar to the posses-

* Milton (who cannot certainly be classed among the vulgar) yet seems to have thought highly of peculiar inspiration, or poetical instinct; witness his repeated mention of the frequent secret admonition of his muse ; addressing whom he says,

—————“ Yet not alone, when thou
 “ Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when Morn
 “ Purples the East.” *Par. Lost*, lib. vii.

And again,

“ Thee, Sion, and the flow'ry brooks beneath,
 “ That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
 “ Nightly I visit——
 “ Then feed on thoughts *that voluntary move*
 “ *Harmonious numbers*, as the wakeful bird
 “ Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
 “ Tunes her nocturnal note.” *Par. Lost*, lib. iii.

sion

sion of a double voice, second sight, or other phenomena of nature.

It has moreover been conceived, that this extraordinary faculty was confined and bound by the hand of nature, to roll its more than electric fires along a single path, and that if it ever strayed, or were by accidental circumstances precluded from that path, the remaining portion of the mind which it inhabited, displayed little more than inexplicable dulness, and imbecility bordering on the state of an idiot. This latter part of the system, indeed, seems to have been thought necessary, in order to confirm, or perhaps to enhance, the miracle of the former; although it may be said that, in conformity with such opinions, genius is to be considered as degrading man, not exalting him, since it tends to shew the confinement of human intellect *.

In

* If the remark be not too ludicrous, on the groundwork of this system, the amusive author of the *Cabinet des Fées* may be said to have built her description of Fine Ear,

In an equal extreme, on the other hand, it has been the fashion of modern opinion, under the guidance of Dr. Johnson *, seconded by Reynolds (in this point certainly the pupil of Johnson), to overthrow as completely as possible the erroneous notions of former times, and to assert that there is no such distinct essence as the power which has been thus exalted under the title of genius. Dr. Johnson appeared to think the distinction of genius, even in the wide sense in which Horace has used it, a mere phantom of the imagination; that the powers of the mind might be equally directed to all objects, and that the same capacity, the same comprehension, and the same energy, would form alike the lawgiver, the astronomer, the moral philosopher, the logician, the painter, or the poet.

Ear, Grudgeon, Marksman, and the other attendants of Fortunio, who, in this view of the subject, may all be said to have been men of genius.

* Helvetius and other foreign writers, have maintained similar doctrines.

While

While we rest in the general terms just now used to describe the powers of the mind, this assertion may undoubtedly pass unquestioned; but when we proceed to investigate what particular faculties of the mind are combined in those general terms capacity, comprehension, energy, when we find reason to believe that there are such distinct divisions of mental qualities as judgment, imagination, and taste, it will scarcely be possible to deny, that as most, if not all men, are found to be partially and unequally endowed with the gifts of nature, mental as well as corporeal, the various distributions of strength in these several properties of intellect must cause, in different men, a decided difference of power to attain such acquisitions as are conceded to a superior degree of these respective faculties. Nor will it probably be contended, that in order to form a wise and just judge, the powers of an ardent and brilliant imagination are so requisite as those of cool and profound judgment, or that, in order to
become

become an accurate logician, the same degrees of lively fancy, or refined taste, are expected, as are indispensable in the growth of a poet or a painter.

Without acceding, therefore, to the violence of the doctrines on either side, a violence to which our feelings deny assent, and by which, even without examination, we are sensible that common experience is outraged, may it not be safer, and nearer to the truth, to steer a middle course, and to believe, that *in all those pursuits which require similar faculties of the mind, and in those only, an equal degree of excellence may indifferently be attained?* To ascertain the precise degree of connexion between those various powers of the mind by which the summit of excellence is reached, in the extensive range of human pursuits, would embrace a scope of investigation and discussion, to which, if the talents of the writer were adequate, the task would be superfluous on this occasion. It will be sufficient for his design, to examine with what properties of the mind the excellencies

lencies of painting and sculpture are connected, and whether they are such as the English nation never can hope to exhibit.

Before we proceed to this second division of the subject, a few words yet remain to be offered, which the reader is entreated to admit by way of corollary. Under the name of genius two things have frequently been confounded together, namely, the capacity, or power of acquisition, and an uncontrollable bent or disposition to a particular study; but the difference between them is in reality total. They may, and sometimes do, reside together, but they have no farther concern with each other than as they inhabit the same mansion, and as the latter serves as a stimulus to the former. The demonstration of this appeals to experience. The numberless failures of youths whom no dissuasions could deter from the fatal pursuit of the arts, demonstrate the insufficiency of inclination to ensure success, and the probability that inclination alone may constitute

stitute that unhapyy propensity or bias, so often misleading the fond confiding parent, and finally condemning its victim to penury and despair. Such failures are never to be contemplated without pity; they seem to take their rise in a native sensibility of mind, which might have led to happier consequences,

“*Si sic Fata dedissent;*”

and the inquiries of the speculatist have often been called forth to examine the cause of such a seeming self-contradiction in the impulses of nature.

Why appearances of contradiction should exist in nature is doubtless inscrutable, unless by beings of a more exalted state than ours; yet in the present instance, without incurring the imputation of arrogance, it may be allowable to hazard a simple conjecture respecting the cause which gives a bias to any particular study; which bias, when it fortunately coincides with the peculiar and superior gifts imparted by nature to
the

the individual, constitutes in after life the form, and directs the force, of true genius.

DISCOVERY, as it is at all times the strongest, is probably also the earliest intellectual pleasure we receive, and it can scarcely be doubted, that with the first intellectual discovery which we make, a positive, indelible idea of pleasure must connect itself. Is it not therefore highly probable, that what is in this sense called genius, viz. a supposed pre-disposition from nature to the study of any art or science, would, if there were opportunities of accurate investigation, be found to appertain to that particular art or science in which an infant makes the earliest accidental discovery? By *discovery* is here meant any momentary disclosure of, or insight (however slight) into, the methods or constitutional parts of any art or science;—such a disclosure as would be sufficient to fill the infant mind with a consciousness of superiority to its former state, as well as to the state of most other minds with
which

which it is in habits of communication*.

But to return from this digression.



SECT. II.

Of Genius, in relation to Painting.

It appears, that the degree of excellence to be attained by minds whose powers are congenial with the object of pursuit, depends on the combination of greater or smaller portions of the qualities from which those powers result. The application of this argument to painting is now to be made.

* What effects the pleasure of discovery may produce in riper minds, and with what momentous consequences it may be attended, has been exemplified in Sir I. Newton, whose faculties were roused to the investigation of all nature's laws by the accidental discovery of a single particle of her ordinations.

Genius

Genius in the plastic arts appears to comprize three distinct qualities, taste, judgment, and imagination, together with an organic impulse, or extraordinary sensibility of some particular organ conducive to the desired purpose. There may be also other subordinate divisions*, but these four requisites appear principally to subsist separate from each other.

With regard to the former three, is it necessary to mention that imagination, judgment, taste, are each sometimes visibly active in men of various descriptions, without any mixture, or at least with a very inconsiderable one, of the others? Proofs of common experience are too obvious to need a comment †.

As

* A distinction of a different kind is familiarly in use; the character of genius is given to a felicity of forming extraordinary combinations, and that of taste to extreme delicacy of sensibility; but these are confined and inferior definitions—they speak only of a *part* of genius and a *part* of taste.

† I do not pretend to make the discriminations in

As to what has been denominated organic impulse, this quality, of however inferior a rank in the scale of excellence, will be found to be no less essentially requisite than the others. Of what avail were it to a musician to possess eminently the powers of imagination or taste, if he want either natural sensibility or correctness of ear? of what to the candidate in painting, if Heaven have withheld the finest discriminations of sight with respect to colours?

Nor is it a quality less distinct from the others. It will be obvious to the slightest reflection, that it is to be observed in many persons wholly destitute of the higher mental

other arts with which I have been less conversant (although I do not doubt they may be found in those likewise), but I may be allowed to offer an opinion, that, *without the absolute exclusion of any one quality by the superiority of others in the same man*, Raffaello possessed more taste and judgment than imagination; Michael Angelo more imagination and judgment than taste; Titian a considerable portion of all three in nearly equal degrees; Rubens mostly imagination; Corregio mostly taste. I repeat, that this remark cannot be made without the *qualification* with which I have prefaced it.

faculties;

faculties; and, in this case, those very persons may be found dull with regard to the general perception of art, or study of nature. In proportion as the organic impulse is more or less mixed with the higher qualities of genius, the mind must feel a power of *relish* in different degrees of extension.

To venture an instance on this head; Domenichino appears to have been greatly deficient, nay (it may almost be said), nearly destitute, of this organic sensibility, and the demonstrations of his great powers of mind always wear the appearance of labour and constraint: on the other hand, Corregio may perhaps be singled out among painters as possessing this quality in a most distinguished degree. If we except grace, it is hard to give a definite name to any intellectual accomplishment displayed in the works of Corregio. They are neither the schools of drawing, expression, character, nor historic propriety. They are the offspring of a mind justly conscious of its own superior, but unexamined, powers. In re-

1 2

turn,

turn, there appears to be a peculiar power annexed to organic sensibility, to which every one imperceptibly, but irresistibly, yields. This may likewise be best explained by examples: Dr. Young, for instance, is more melancholy than his readers; he prevails over them, exclusively of other causes, by his superior sensitiveness of melancholy. It is no matter that I sometimes neither admire nor approve,—I feel. The same remark may be made with regard to the late amiable and regretted Cowper.

But, on the principles already defined, viz. that in those pursuits which require similar faculties of the mind, a similar degree of excellence may indifferently be attained, and that the degree is regulated by the greater or less combination of requisite qualities, it is easy to form this farther obvious proposition;—that, in all intellectual studies which are of a similar nature, and require the exertion of similar powers of the mind, the same person will reach, or be capable of reaching, equal excellence in whichever study

study the earliest decision of accident or other circumstance, shall make the object of his pursuit, provided he shall combine, in equal degree, the natural faculties conducive to the display of his powers.

Let us see whether this reasoning be at all auspicious to the probability of English *eminence* in the plastic art.

It would be only to trespass on the reader's patience, to repeat the numerous expressions which have been used by writers, to shew the intimate mutual participation of the natures of poetry and painting, and the dependence of their power on similar exertions of genius; from the lively sallies of Horace,

“ —————Pictoribus atque Poetis

“ Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas;”

down to the sententious declaration of De Fresnoy,

“ Ut pictura poesis erit.”

Let us hasten to what is of far greater importance, to consider the distinct causes

of this entire coincidence of effect. To state these in few words, it is sufficient, after what has been already explained, to observe, that the powers derived from those faculties of the mind which have been mentioned as necessary to the formation of a painter, viz. imagination or fancy, judgment, and taste, are precisely those which evince the existence of poetical genius.

These two arts, of poetry and painting, deriving their excellence from similar sources in the mind, and subsisting in the exercise of similar powers, it follows, that, as far as regards their higher and intellectual department, that is, in all that depends on imagination, judgment, and taste, a very fine poet might have become a very fine painter, and *vice versâ*; or, that, of all such painters and poets, if each had, by early and original choice, applied himself to the other profession, he might, and probably would, have carried that other art precisely to the same degree which he reached in his own.

In

In fact, what more resembles the *sublime* parts of Homer's poems, than the lofty conceptions of the painter of the Capella Sistina? What are more like to his *dramatic* excellencies than the living, the ever-living characters of the painter of the Vatican? What more equals the majesty of Virgil, than the serene effulgence of Titian? What more like to the abrupt grandeur of Pindar, than the bursting splendours of Rubens and Tintoret? Who more congenial with the tender but mellowed sweetness of Sappho or Tibullus, than Corregio or Parmigiano?

As a farther proof of this similarity of genius in the two arts (and by which one may be induced to think there is a strong similarity also in the organic impulses), if we examine attentively the writings of the poets, we shall find that, in proportion as authors stand high in rank, or in degree of general estimation, their imagery is more accurate, and is proved to be more satisfactory to the eye of a painter.

To take a few instances from among the

poets of our own country. In Akenside, who, though endowed with strong and nervous conceptions of thought, must still be regarded as a poet of a second class, we find the following examples of incompetent imagery :

Fools ! who of God, as of each other deem ;
 Who his invariable acts deduce
 From sudden counsels transient as their own ;
 Nor farther of his bounty, than th' event
 Which haply meets their loud and eager pray'r,
 Acknowledge ; nor beyond the drop minute
 Which haply they have tasted, heed the source
 That flows for all ; *the fountain of his love,*
 Which, from *the summit where he sits enthron'd,*
Pours health and joy, unfailing streams, throughout
 The spacious region flourishing in view !

He, God most high (bear witness earth and heaven),
The living fountains in himself contains
Of beauteous and sublime. With him enthron'd,
 Ere days or years trod their ethereal way,
 In his supreme intelligence enthron'd,
 The *Queen of Love* holds her unclouded state,
 Urania.——

What can be more incongruous to the
 majesty

majesty of the author's theme (not to mention the company of the Queen of Love), than this image of the *two fountains* of beautiful and sublime contained in the Supreme Being; or the *two streams* of health and joy constantly running down from under his throne? Images nearly bordering on the ludicrous, in the midst of a description where every thing ought to impress the mind of the reader with the most sublime and awful ideas! With how much stronger effect does Thomson, a poet justly of a higher name, describe the majesty of that being,

“Whom nought can image!”

It is from such want of picturesque energy, together with other deficiencies, perhaps essentially of a similar nature, that Akenside stands, as a poet, in the rank he now holds, and no higher.

If, on the contrary, we look to Milton,

eminently placed in the first class of poetic genius, we shall find his imagery chiefly, if not wholly, such as may with the strictest propriety, and fullest consent of our feelings, be transferred to canvas; and his descriptions abounding with bold and lofty subjects of figurative painting. To give a few instances of both :

—————Morn,
Wak'd by the circling hours, with rosy hand
Unbarr'd the gates of light.

————Where the great luminary
Aloof the vulgar constellations thick,
That from his lordly eye keep distance due,
Dispenses light from far; they, as they move
Their starry dance (in numbers that compute
Days, months, and years), tow'rds his all-cheering
lamp
Turn swift their various motions.

————His sail broad vans
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground.

————Straight behold the throne
Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread

Wide

Wide o'er the wasteful deep ; with him enthron'd
Sate sable-vested night*.

———Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders fledge with wings
Lay waving round.———

———Where the river of bliss through midst of heaven
Rolls on Elysian flow'rs its amber stream,
With these that never fade, the Spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks enwreath'd with beams.

Of this excellence of the poet we have seen ample specimens in the series of subjects painted from his poems, and exhibited in the Milton Gallery †.

Last, but not least, Shakspeare, the pride of every English heart, seems to have equally participated the genius of either art, and to have shewn an intention of displaying

* The propriety of this description is a striking contrast to that of Akenside, above-mentioned.

† The artist whose creative fancy renders unnecessary any other source of prototype for the productions of his pencil, would not have had recourse to Milton, if he had not found him in this respect perfectly congenial with the mind of a painter.

the mental powers of both. Look at the structure of his dramas ! a species of composition most directly corresponding with the art of the painter. He has indeed clothed his scenes with words—and words

“ Of such sweet breath composed,

“ As made the things more rich ;”

but of him it may be safely said,—and it can be said of very few, and those the greatest dramatists,—that, if his scenes were to pass before the spectator in dumb show, many, if not most of them, would be in a very effectual degree expressive of the mind of the author. Examples may be found in every play. To select only a few ;

In the historical play of Richard III. on the day previous to the important battle which is to decide the fate of an usurper, who can contemplate without admiration the magnificently awful spectacle which the imagination of Shakspeare prepares ! In front of the rival armies are seen the tents of the two commanders. Richard’s is placed
on

on the fore-ground, Richmond's is discovered at a little distance. It is night, whose shades are interrupted only by the glimmering fires of either army. Amidst this gloom the ghosts of those relatives whom Richard is known (in the former acts) to have murdered, rise slowly from the earth, and address themselves with menacing aspect, to the bloody tyrant, and with gentle demeanour to the avenger of their wrongs. The prophecy of the fate which awaits Richard on the morrow is the whole amount of accessory knowledge from language in this scene; through all the rest of the action words may be said to be superfluous, the sentiments are already in the breast of the spectators; yet a scene more awfully impressive than even the present mutilated representation of this powerful conception, is scarcely to be found on any stage. Nay, to proceed a step farther, even the subsequent soliloquy of Richard, when he starts from sleep, is generally less distinguished by the language, than by the action, of the performer, to which the circumstances

cumstances above related are calculated to give the fullest scope.

Let us next turn to a scene which may be placed in contrast with that just mentioned, a scene wherein the tender passions are painted with the same force which the poet displays in representing the violent and terrible ones, namely, the parting of Romeo and Juliet in the garden. Apprized as the spectators are of the preceding history of their loves, who does not readily interpret the fond reluctance and desires which give rise to a hesitating tardiness of departure in Romeo, and the anxious and impatient earnestness of the tender, enamoured and startling Juliet! The dialogue is indeed beautiful, but though it contributes much to the delight, it adds nothing to the information of the spectator.

Another instance of the graphic powers of his mind, is to be found in the painting of a dream, in the play of Henry VIII. Every reader of taste will know, that the dream of Queen Catharine is here alluded to; which,
in

in the midst of so many splendid decorations lavished by our theatres on trivial objects, is left, in representation, without any of the appropriate ornaments designed by our immortal bard. Let us read the account of his design in the language in which the heads of the scene are quaintly couched, in the usual editions of his works. Catharine is supposed to be fallen gently asleep, to sad and solemn music, when she is greeted by the following

Vision.

“ Enter solemnly, one after another, six
 “ personages, clad in white robes, wearing
 “ on their heads garlands of bays, and
 “ golden vizards on their faces, branches
 “ of bays, or palm, in their hands. They
 “ first congee to her, then dance, and at
 “ certain changes the two first hold a spare
 “ garland over her head, at which the other
 “ four make reverend curtsies. Then the
 “ two that held the garland, deliver the
 “ same to the other next two, who observe
 “ the same order in their changes, and
 “ holding

“ holding the garland over her head : which
 “ done, they deliver the same garland to
 “ the last two, who likewise observe the
 “ same order. At which, as it were by in-
 “ spiration, she makes in her sleep signs of
 “ rejoicing, and holds up her hands to
 “ heaven. And so, in their dancing, they
 “ vanish, carrying the garland with them.”

Although this description is certainly far from adequate to the poet's idea, as expressed in Catharine's speech a few minutes after her awaking, when she inquires of her attendants,

“ ———Saw ye not a blessed troop

“ Invite me to a banquet, whose bright faces

“ Cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun !”

yet it will scarcely be disputed, that it conveys a sufficient idea of one of the most magnificently graceful and interesting scenes of pantomime, that have ever been exhibited on any stage.

Let us look at one instance more, in the scene of the banquet, in Macbeth's palace. Macbeth having defeated his enemies, and
by

by artful treachery removed the friendly Banquo from the path of his ambition, assembles all the nobility of his kingdom to be the tributary witnesses and partakers of his new glories. He prepares a sumptuous feast in a hall decorated with all the splendour that royal ostentation can supply. The glittering tables are spread with the richest luxuries. The guests, vying with each other in magnificence, are seated; the table is full, except one seat, prepared for the master of the feast. He descends from his throne, and from the side of his regal partner, to mix in the flow of festivity; he approaches his seat, he turns to it—it is filled: with what?—in the midst of the gorgeous pomp and roseate gaiety of the assembly, he beholds the pallid spectre of the friend he had treacherously consigned to destruction.—What spectacle could be presented more awful! what contrast more striking! what charm more powerful than such a form of horror to put to flight the thoughts of exulting crime, and make “all the pomp” of

“Tapers, temples, swim before his sight.”

It

It may surely be pardonable to doubt, whether all the rules of Aristotle will ever furnish a scene of more instructive terror, than that which Shakspeare's pencil has here drawn.

The word *pencil* is here applicable in its strict figurative sense. *Sight* is the organ by which the poet designs to rouse the mind, and awe the spectator into the conviction of moral truths. To paint to sight the soul-subduing terrors of guilty remorse, he chooses the ghastly image of a bleeding phantom, breaking on the splendour of the night. To give the utmost force to this graphic investiture, he sets wide the lofty columned hall, he flings over it the lustre of a thousand lights, he fills it with youth, beauty, and elegance; all is previously prepared for the flash of contrast; the pale murdered friend, invisible but to guilt, completes the magic effect of the scene.

Every thing that passes subsequently to this astonishing moment, is also most adequately expressed by the painting of action.

Lady

Lady Macbeth hastens to her distracted lord—she remonstrates, she looks round in vain for the object of his alarm—she strives to compose his spirits; he becomes more and more violent, and she finally dismisses the assembly.

It will scarcely be requisite to repeat the admiration before expressed (and which the whole world feels), of the beauties of Shakspeare's dialogue, but the assertion may be repeated, that in this scene its beauties are accessory ornaments only.

After delivering these sentiments respecting the truly wonderful powers of picturesque effect displayed in the above scenes, it would be an office not more ungrateful than foreign to the present purpose, to call in question the ingenuity of critic lore, which has so often divested Shakspeare of this splendid union of powers; or to notice in this place the negligence of custom, which robs him of those advantages of scenic machinery of which his own time was so little apprized, and in which ours is so abundant.

These

These circumstances equally contribute to the honours of our immortal bard, and demonstrate, that when his scenes are deprived of their theatric substance, the very shadow is still worth preserving.

But, if there be this similarity between the essential powers of the mind, respectively necessary, what then is yet wanting to shape distinctively these faculties, floating within the grasp of either art, and fix them in that of painting? nothing but a more especial possession and equal determination of that organic disposition which has been mentioned, and which, in order to establish a deduction of the impossibility of the existence of Painting in this country, must be supposed never to have existed here; for if it once exist, it may, on every propitious occasion, appear united with those greater qualities of intellect. But there can be little doubt that this inferior boon of nature has been, and is, observable every day in numberless instances, in every country; a late admired artist, Mortimer, might be
adduced

adduced as an instance in our own; and, to seek no other example, the ornament of English art, Reynolds, may be held forth as one, who (together with higher qualities) was most eminently endowed in this particular point; who sometimes, by the aid of this quality alone, diffused an inexplicable charm over pictures which possess very little other claim to admiration.

On the whole, therefore, we are come by easy deductions to form a conclusion, nearly amounting to demonstration, that, if it be once allowed that there have been English poets, since the same qualities of mind which constitute the poet, constitute also the painter, and since the other natural faculties requisite to the especial excellence of painting are found to have existed in England, **England is capable of producing a painter.**

SECT. III.

Of the Criticisms of Foreign Writers.

IN direct contradiction to the whole of the preceding statement, forth come the dogmas of Winckelman and Du Bos, who deny to the climate of England the bare possibility of the birth of a painter. Winckelman, after speaking of the influence which he concludes climate, government, education, and customs to have on the arts, respectively, in various countries, adds,

“Io lasceró che altri giudichi se da queste
 “medesime cagioni proceda che gli Inglesi
 “non abbiano mai avuto ne’ tempi andati
 “alcun celebre pittore*.”

Du Bos gives an equally gracious account of such climates, in general, as that which we inhabit.

“Les arts naissent d’eux memes sous les

* See the translation from the German by the learned Carlo Fea. Book i. chap. 2.

“climats

“ climats qui leur sont propres. Les peuples
 “ chez qui les arts n’ont pas fleuri, sont les
 “ peuples qui habitent un climat, qui n’est
 “ point propre aux arts. Ils y seroient nés
 “ d’eux-mêmes sans cela, ou du moins ils y
 “ seroient passés a la faveur du commerce.”

He then proceeds to pronounce the following verdict on England :

“ Le climat d’Angleterre a bien *poussé sa*
 “ *chaleur* jusques a produire de grands
 “ sujets dans toutes les sciences et dans
 “ toutes les professions. Il a même donné
 “ de bons musiciens et d’excellens poètes,
 “ mais il n’a point produit de peintres, qui
 “ tiennent parmi les peintres celebres le
 “ même rang que les philosophes, les sa-
 “ vans, les poètes, et les autres Anglois
 “ illustres tiennent parmi ceux des autres
 “ nations qui se sont distingués dans la
 “ même profession qu’eux. Les peintres
 “ Anglois se reduisent à trois faiseurs de
 “ portraits *.”

* Reflexions critiques sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture.
 Tom. ii. sect. 13.

It is doubtful if the following farther remark be designed to extend to England, but it affords, in the last sentence, a singular illustration of the system of the writer.

“ Tout le monde sait qu’il n’est sorti des
 “ extrémités du nord, que des poètes sau-
 “ vages, des versificateurs grossiers, et des
 “ froids coloristes. La peinture et la poésie
 “ ne se sont point approchés du pôle plus
 “ près que la hauteur de la Hollande. On
 “ n’a même dans cette province qu’une
 “ peinture morfondue. Les poètes Hol-
 “ landois ont montré plus de vigueur et
 “ plus de feu d’esprit que les peintres leurs
 “ compatriotes. Il semble que la poésie *ne*
 “ *craigne pas le froid* autant que la pein-
 “ ture *.”

It is not here intended to examine minutely the grounds of condemnation which have been assumed by these authors, relative to their favourite systems of influential

* Reflexions critiques sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture.
 Tom. ii. sect. 13.

influential climates. The appreciation of the former of the two shall be resigned to those patient readers who shall have made themselves masters of the whole train of his learned and laborious reasoning. It must at the same time be owned, that it may be considered fortunate for the advocates of English graphic talents, that the deduction above insinuated respecting the inability of our artists, is, in great part, formed from some preceding observations on our national poetry. The passage containing them shall be presented to the reader, who, if he be an Englishman, may, from M. Winckelman's system, claim, at least, the full prerogative of a cool judgment.

“ Que' talenti che aveano i Greci per le
 “ arti si ravvisano ancora quasi general-
 “ mente negli abitanti delle provincie meri-
 “ dionali d'Italia, ne' quali la viva imagina-
 “ zione sublima lo spirito, laddove in altri
 “ popoli, e principalmente presso l'Inglese
 “ pensatore, troppo domina *la fredda ragi-*
 “ *one.* È stato detto, nè senza fondamento,
 “ che

“ che i poeti oltramontani parlano bensì un
 “ linguaggio immaginoso, ma poche imma-
 “ gini ci presentano ; e diffatti convenir si
 “ deve, che *le terribili descrizioni, nelle*
 “ *quali tutta consiste la grandezza di Mil-*
 “ *ton, non sono punto oggetti per un sublime*
 “ *e nobil pennello, anzi in nessun modo po-*
 “ *trebbono dipingersi*.*”

With regard to the author next quoted, fair endeavours shall be used to give a proof of the just estimation due to his judgment, by calling him forth on plain and demonstrable ground, where the force of his critical discernment may, of consequence, be tried with precision.

The following observations on one of the historical Cartoons by Raffaello, now in the palace at Hampton-Court, are also transcribed in the writer's own language, without translation, lest any doubt should arise of an attempt at unfair representation of his text:

“ Tout le monde connoit le tableau de

* See the Italian edition before quoted.

“ Raphael,

“ Raphael, ou Jesus Christ confirme a St.
 “ Pierre le pouvoir des clefs en presence
 “ des autres Apôtres ; c’est une des pieces
 “ de tapisserie de la tenture des Actes des
 “ Apôtres que le Pape Leon X. fit faire
 “ pour la chapelle de Sixte IV. et dont les
 “ Cartons originaux se conservent dans la
 “ gallerie du palais que Marie Stuard, Prin-
 “ cesse d’Orange, fit batir a Hampton-
 “ Court.

“ St. Pierre tenant ces clefs est a genouil
 “ devant Jesus Christ, et il paroît pénétré
 “ d’une émotion conforme a sa situation ;
 “ sa reconnoissance et son zele pour son
 “ maitre paroissent sensiblement sur son
 “ visage. Saint Jean l’Evangéliste repre-
 “ senté jeune comme il étoit, est depeint avec
 “ l’action d’un jeune homme ; il applaudit
 “ avec le mouvement de franchise si naturelle
 “ a son age, au digne choix que fait son
 “ maitre, et qu’on croit apercevoir qu’il eût
 “ fait lui-même, tant la vivacité de son ap-
 “ probation est bien marquée par un air
 “ de visage, et par un mouvement du corps

“ très empressé. L'Apôtre qui est auprès
 “ de lui, semble plus âgé et montre la
 “ physionomie et la contenance d'un hom-
 “ me posé; aussi conformément a son
 “ caractère, applaudit il par un simple mou-
 “ vement des bras et de la tête. On dis-
 “ tingue a l'extrémité du groupe un homme
 “ bilieux et sanguin; il a le visage haut
 “ en couleur, la barbe tirante sur le roux,
 “ le front large, le nez quarré, et tous les
 “ traits d'un homme sourcilleux. Il re-
 “ garde donc avec dedain, et en fronçant le
 “ sourcil, une preference qu'on divine bien
 “ qu'il trouve injuste. Les hommes de ce
 “ temperament croient volontiers ne pas
 “ valoir moins que les autres. *Pres de lui*
 “ *est placé un autre apôtre, embarrassé de*
 “ *sa contenance: on le discerne pour etre*
 “ *d'un temperament melancolique a la mai-*
 “ *greur de son visage livide, a sa barbe noire*
 “ *et plate, a l'habitude de son corps, enfin*
 “ *a tous les traits que les naturalistes ont*
 “ *assignés a ce temperament. Il se courbe,*
 “ *et les yeux fixement attachés sur J. C. il*
 “ *est*

“ *est dévoré d’une jalousie morne pour un*
 “ *choix dont il ne se plaindra point, mais*
 “ *dont il conservera longtems un vif ressen-*
 “ *timent : enfin on reconnoit là Judas aussi*
 “ *distinctement, qu’a le voir pendu au*
 “ *figuier ; une bourse renversée au col *.*”

What reader, having attended the Abbé through this intricate investigation of the characters of the various Disciples (and probably attended with pleasure, and a readiness to admit the plausible ingenuity of his remarks), will not be a little startled at finding that the figure reserved by the critic, for the final stamp of his descriptive as well as discerning powers, should be declared to be that unfortunate Disciple who, the relation given by St. Mathew convinces us, could not possibly be present at the scene described. Raffaele, it seems, had been more attentive to the Scriptures than the Abbé Du Bos, and had carefully omitted the figure of Judas, partly (to adopt a mode of statement used by an eminent orator), because Judas

* *Reflexions Critiques*, tome i. sect. 13.

would have been a very unfit spectator of such a scene, and partly, because he was hanged before it took place.

Criticisms of such a nature more fairly expose their author to ridicule than to serious animadversion.—What opinion shall we form of a critic so little disposed to attend to a strict description of the objects before him, that he will not even condescend (if a vulgar phrase may be pardoned) *to count noses*? Had he taken the trouble of this species of investigation, he would have found, that there are in this celebrated picture *eleven* Disciples and our Saviour.

What authority, then, shall we concede to such remarks? If thus vague in obvious facts, what shall we conclude to be the accuracy of the writer's sentiments, when he sallies forth into metaphysical regions, more suited indeed to the free excursions of his fancy, but not equally capable of supplying demonstrable proofs of his error and presumption? *Ex pede Herculem**.

It

* It would be unjust to omit *the extreme modesty* of the

It is not here meant to derogate from the general merits of this ingenious work ; we are all apprized that

“ Opere in longe fas est obrepere somnum *.”

But if the author be much given to this kind of mental refreshment, it is not always certain in what part of his work this bounty of nature may overtake him, and consequently, on grounds of merely fanciful speculation, it may be difficult to ascertain with precision if he be nodding or waking.

It would, moreover, be truly uncandid to detract any thing from the praise of an author who seems, in some other respects, so well inclined to our nation, if it be indeed

the Abbé's remark immediately following the above exquisite description : “ Je n'ai point *preté d'esprit a Raphaël*,” says he, fearful, no doubt, that the reader should think he had concealed himself behind the name of the painter, for the sake of giving *additional lustre to Raff'ael*.

* In works of great length, an occasional nap is the poet's privilege.

our nation to which he alludes in the following passage, where what he takes from us on the score of genius, he compensates in his record of our moral exertions. In speaking of the moral uses of painting, he says,

“ Dans quelques pays protestants, ou sous
 “ pretexte de reforme, les statues et les
 “ tableaux ont été bannis des Eglises, le
 “ gouvernement ne laisse pas de mettre en
 “ œuvre le pouvoir que la peinture à na-
 “ turellement sur les hommes pour contri-
 “ buer a tenir le peuple dans le respect des
 “ loix. On voit au dessus des *Placards* ou
 “ les loix sont ecrites, des tableaux repre-
 “ sentant le supplice auquel les infraçteurs,
 “ qui les violeroient, seroient condamnés.
 “ Il faut que dans cet etat, rempli d’obser-
 “ vateurs politiques qui etendent leur atten-
 “ tion sur bien des choses auxquelles on
 “ ne daigne point faire reflexion en d’autres
 “ pays, nos observateurs ayent remarqué
 “ que ces tableaux etoient propres a donner
 “ du moins aux enfans *qui doivent un jour*
 “ *devenir*

“ *devenir des hommes plus de crainte des*
 “ *chatiments prononcés par la loix*.*”

This is a moral use indeed ! such an encomium may recommend the study of the Arts even in Bow-street ; but whether this moral example be drawn from an observation of facts, equally accurate with that already quoted respecting the Cartoon of Raffaëlle, shall be left to the reader’s decision.

One word more of Du Bos before we return to our subject. In what a lamentable state of ignorance, with respect to the Arts, must the whole world have been at the time of his writing, or what an extraordinary idea must he have formed of his own singular endowments of sagacity and powers of discovery, when he makes the following remark regarding the distinction of the two arts of painting and poetry !

“ *Personne ne doute que les poemes ne*

* Ibid. tome i. sect. 4.

“ puissent exciter en nous des passions arti-
 “ ficielles ; *mais il paroitra peut-etre extra-*
 “ *ordinaire a bien du monde et meme a des*
 “ *peintres de profession*, d’entendre dire que
 “ des tableaux, que des couleurs appliquées
 “ sur une toile, puissent exciter en nous des
 “ passions, cependant cette verité ne peut
 “ surprendre que ceux qui ne font pas
 “ d’attention a ce qui se passe dans eux
 “ mêmes *.”

Why it should appear more surprising to
 the learned critic, that the passions should
 be expressed by “ des couleurs appliquées
 “ sur une toile,” than by ink *appliqué* on
 paper, must, it is presumed, be referred to
 the chapter of occult causes †.

* Ibid. tome i. sect. 4.

† The character of the Abbé Du Bos is thus given by
 the authors of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire Historique*: “ Il
 “ ne scavoit pas la musique, il n’avoit jamais pu faire
 “ des vers, et n’avoit pas un tableau ; mais il avoit beau-
 “ coup lu, vu, entendu ou réfléchi.” A ground-work
 worthy of the superstructure !

With

With these ravishers of our lawful claims, the author of the *Inquiry into the real and imaginary Obstructions to the Arts in England*, has combined the far more formidable name of the President Montesquieu; but, though a due deference must ever be paid to the learning, spirit, and manly sense of that treatise, candour also exacts the observation, that in the ardour of patriotic zeal, Mr. Barry appears to have over-rated the offence here supposed to have been offered to our country *. Montesquieu calls in question our propensity to the refinements of taste, in distinction from the native force and boldness of invention which he is willing to allow us.

“ Leurs poetes (the poets of England)
 “ auroient plus souvent cette rudesse origi-
 “ nale d’invention qu’une certaine deli-
 “ catesse que donne le gout; on y trou-
 “ veroit quelque chose qui approcheroit

* I do not fear that I shall offend by honest difference of opinion.

“ plus de la force de Michel Ange, que de
 “ la grace de Raphael *.”

There does not appear any thing very discouraging in this sentence. He does not deny taste to the English, but is of opinion that the boldness of their spirit would be superior to their taste—that they would be more like Michael Angelo than Raffaelle. In another passage, he says, “ Ils auroient plus
 “ d’esprit que du gout.” On the whole, his remarks on the genius of the English, are such as ought rather to be stated in opposition to Du Bos and Winckelman. The propensities of mind which, under this head, he attributes to the English, are certainly of a very high class.

Here, then, dismissing these futile, though ingenious criticisms, founded on occult causes and secret influences, let us draw the fair conclusion, and fix it in our minds, that the nation which has produced a Milton and a Shakspeare, may justly aspire to the equal

* *Esprit des Loix* l. xix. c. 27.

honours

honours of an Apelles, or a Michael Angelo; but that an equal cultivation must prepare the mind in both cases.

It has likewise been said, that a *commercial* people cannot direct its mind to the study of the liberal arts. This insinuation will hardly require an answer, while it is yet fresh in our memories, that the same remark has been passed on us respecting the exertion of national *warlike* energies; and while the whole world contemplates with respect the unprecedented armed union of our nation, derived from no source but the love of freedom and independence (though haply a while slumbering, not extinguished nor enervated in our bosoms), and for so long a time maintained at no charge or burthen but that which each individual voluntarily took upon himself.

If any trifling argument to the same effect have been drawn from the want of *organic* perfectibility in our cloud-encompassed island, the refutation of such a charge is left to the
scientific

scientific judgments of those who have recently witnessed, on a stage destined to the talents of a brighter atmosphere, the highest powers of voice and music in the natives of this country, of both sexes.

This chapter will be aptly closed by a selection of some observations from the above-mentioned work of Mr. Barry, respecting the causes which, at one particular period, impeded the progress of the Arts amongst us.

“ It will appear that the accidental circumstance of the change of religion, which
 “ happened just at the time we should have
 “ set out in the Arts, gave us a dislike to
 “ the superior and nobler parts; the subjects of the Christian history, which might
 “ be generally understood and felt, were
 “ then prohibited; so that except landscape, portrait, and still life, every thing
 “ else was either unintelligible or uninteresting to the people at large; the artists
 “ then were led to practice only the baser
 “ and

“ and lower branches; the farther they ad-
 “ vanced in these, the wider they wandered
 “ from the truth and dignity of art *.”

“ It appears that, until the time of Ed-
 “ ward IV. and Queen Elizabeth, what-
 “ ever little painting was practised in Eng-
 “ land was of an historical nature, taken
 “ from the legends of the Saints, or from the
 “ Old and New Testament. These were, as
 “ many as could be come at, destroyed, and
 “ the practice of all such interdicted for the
 “ future. The taste of the public and the
 “ labour of the artist, was from this period
 “ turned into a new channel, and has spent
 “ itself upon portraits, landscapes, and other
 “ inanimate matters, in which the human
 “ mind, and consequently the genius of the
 “ artist, if there were any, had little or
 “ nothing to employ itself upon; so that
 “ historical painting was proscribed just at
 “ the time we were going to receive the

* Inquiry into the real and imaginary Obstructions to
 the Acquisition of the Arts in England, chap. v.

“ qualifi-

“ qualifications that would have enabled us
 “ to succeed in it ; at the time when
 “ Spenser, Fairfax, and numbers of other
 “ ingenious men were cultivating and gather-
 “ ing in knowledge of all kinds ancient and
 “ foreign ; and when Lord Bacon, like
 “ another Columbus, was leading us to the
 “ discovery of new worlds in the regions of
 “ knowledge.

“ It is a misfortune,” adds this ingenious
 author, “ never entirely to be retrieved, that
 “ painting was not suffered to grow up
 “ amongst us at the same time with poetry
 “ and the other arts and sciences, whilst
 “ the genius of the nation was yet forming
 “ its character, in strength, beauty and re-
 “ finement.

“ It would have received a strength and a
 “ polish ; and it would, in its turn, have
 “ given to our poetry a greater perfection
 “ in one of its master-features, in which
 “ (Milton and Spenser excepted) it is rather
 “ somewhat defective. But the nation is
 “ now

“ now formed, and perhaps more than
 “ formed, and there is cause to fear that
 “ it may be too late to expect the last de-
 “ gree of perfection in the Art from what
 “ we are now likely to produce in an age
 “ where, perhaps, frothy affectations, and
 “ modish, corrupt, silly opinions of foreign
 “ as well as domestic growth, have but too
 “ generally taken place of masculine vigour
 “ and purity of taste, so necessary both for
 “ the artist and his employer*.”

The favourable opportunity lost to the
 Arts at the moment just described, is here
 painted in so forcible a manner, that it
 may be doubted if it will not appear to many
 to be lost for ever ; but whosoever will take
 into consideration the present enlightened
 state of the public judgment, combined with
 the actual circumstances relative to the art
 which thus vanished at the Reformation,

* Ibid. chap. ix.

will be inclined to indulge more pleasing hopes.

These remarks have insensibly led to the following brief inquiry into the *present state of the Arts in England*.

SKETCH

SKETCH OF THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE
ARTS OF DESIGN IN ENGLAND.

Oh when shall Britain, conscious of her claim,
Stand emulous of Greek and Roman fame!

POPE, EPIST. TO ADDISON.

THE present moment is considered by artists as teeming with the crisis, not of their own destinies, but of the destiny of their Art in England. The accomplished artist, lately Professor of Painting in the Royal Academy, thus warmly expressed his thoughts, in his introductory lecture of last winter :

“ The efficient cause, therefore, why
“ higher art at present is sunk to such a
“ state of inactivity and languor, that it may
“ be doubted whether it will exist much
“ longer,

“ longer, is not a particular one, which
“ private patronage, or the will of an indi-
“ vidual, however great, can remove, but a
“ general cause founded on the bent, the
“ manners, the habits, the modes of a na-
“ tion ; and not of one nation alone, but of
“ all who at present pretend to cultivation.

“ If the Arts are to rise and flourish,
“ grandeur and beauty must animate the
“ public taste, the artist must be occupied
“ by significant, extensive, varied, important
“ works. What right have we to expect
“ such a revolution in our favour ?

“ We have now been in possession of an
“ Academy for near half a century : all the
“ intrinsic means of forming a style alternate
“ at our command ; professional instruction
“ has never ceased to direct the student,
“ and stimulate emulation ; and stipends
“ are granted to relieve the wants of genius,
“ and to finish education by excursions to
“ the former seats of Art. And what is the
“ result ? If we apply to our Exhibition,
“ what does it present but a gorgeous dis-
“ play

“ play of great and athletic powers, con-
 “ demned, if not to the beasts, at least to
 “ the dictates of fashion and vanity ? what,
 “ therefore, can be urged against the con-
 “ clusion, that the Arts are sinking, and
 “ threaten to sink still lower, from the
 “ want of a demand for great and significant
 “ works ?”

The statement presented to us in this en-
 ergetic language, is the expression of a mind
 zealous for the interests of a favourite art,
 and with the solicitude of genius, it may be
 hoped, fondly over-rating its danger. Little
 hesitation will be requisite in allowing, that
 during the course of the last fifty years,
 partly previous to, but more generally since,
 the incorporation of the Artists under the
 patronage of the Sovereign, Painting has,
 in this country, made a gradual regular ad-
 vance. It is superfluous to examine mi-
 nutely to which of these years the absolute
 balance of merit or success may be more
 favourable; whether the scale incline now to
 one painter, and now to another; it is not
 the

the less true, that the general mass of knowledge and power in painting is increased within that period.

Yet it is but too evident, that the channel of the Arts, which, generally speaking, has alone been hitherto open to the English painter, viz. that of portraiture and the subordinate branches of Design, cannot exclusively admit of much farther progress. It is a narrow river, whose banks have all been explored and occupied, and if it does not finally open into some great ocean, Genius, like a wearied navigator, must be content to relinquish hope, to take shelter in his narrow cell, and watch the lapse of ages in silence and obscurity. But all is not lost while the spirit of the artist remains unexhausted. Should brighter hopes disclose their dawn, should the artists of our country once find, in the advance of national encouragement, that opening of which they are so ardently in search, they yet dare to look forward to prospects of enchanting brightness; they conceive they see the Spirit of
the

the Arts ready to expand his wings over their destined path,

“ To shed his thousand splendours on the air ;”

they feel a confidence that they could steadfastly keep in view his arduous flight, and that, even if the progress of Fate be too slow to admit of their reaching the promised region, they shall at least be able to point it out distinctly to succeeding aspirers.

An inquiry, therefore, into the actual situation of men who so earnestly express their alarms and wishes, cannot be devoid of interest.

Painting.

Of all the countries that have yet been blessed with civilization, England is that in which the Arts, in latter times, have most tardily disclosed their growth ; and, if the remark of Lord Kaimes be true, that “ had
 “ the art of painting made a *slower* progress
 “ in Italy, it might have continued in vigour
 “ to this day ;” its abode, when it shall be
 once

once established among us, may fairly be supposed to promise a duration little short of eternity. The walls of our palaces have been, from the period of the Reformation, successively covered with the works of foreign artists. Holbein, Rubens, Vandyck, Lely, Kneller, nay, Verrio, Gennari, and La Guerre, have by turns enjoyed the numerous favours of our Sovereigns, adorned the halls and filled the cabinets of the nobles ; while scarcely a few portraits by the pencils of our own painters, of Dobson, Jamesone, Cooper, Greenhill and Riley, were thought worthy of notice ; and some even of these have been thrown aside to furnish moments of surprise to future virtuosi, or some futile topics to pedantic research.

In the present day our country has begun to emerge from this state of insensibility to the merit of her native artists, who, if they have not yet ascertained their superiority in the highest provinces of painting, have at least in portraiture claimed the laurel for their brows, approved their native force, and
with

with the magnanimous spirit of a Chatham, disdainfully sent home all auxiliaries*. From the time of Highmore and Hudson, in an extensive course through the works of Hoare, Dance, Gainsborough, REYNOLDS, and others of less distinguished name, to the conspicuous efforts of the present painters, whatever may have been the merits of foreigners, whether drawn hither by ambition in their art, the report of national opulence, or the hope of shelter from domestic violence, the English painter of portrait stands in no dread of competition†. Nay, far advanced above the greatest strength of such accidental visitors, our country may securely look around her, and, during the period that has been men-

* It would be impertinence to suggest to the reader's recollection, the conduct of the great Lord Chatham on the subject of the foreign troops, at one time employed in the service of England.

† The English portrait painters seem to have awakened the highest attention of foreign nations. The French are become collectors of English prints.

tioned, may challenge the proudest pretensions of all Europe.

If the honest accuracy of Highmore and Hudson, the classic correctness of Hoare, the bold fidelity of Dance, the airy pencil and individual resemblances of Gainsborough, may be placed above the common level of industrious talent, in what words shall we speak of him who stands pre-eminent in the list? what foreign rival will be found of his transcendent powers? how do the names of Battoni and Mengs, unquestionably the greatest foreign painters of our times, perceive their laurels tremble as they reach our shore! how quickly does the dainty minuteness of the one, and the insipid labour of the other, shrink before the broad, majestic fervour of Reynolds! The triumph, indeed, of superiority over such competitors, adds little boast to the allowed rival of Vandyck and Titian.

The honours deservedly obtained by this great master have been, in various modes and degrees, continued to us by his successors,
whose

whose works form annually such a splendid display of justly confident and cultivated talent, as cannot be at present equalled in any other country. The meed of portrait-painting seems as truly our own as that of naval combat, and is so decidedly ascribed to us by foreign critics, that those who have wished to depreciate our merits in the arts, have charged us with this single excellence as a proof of defect in our more general powers.

In landscape, the laurels of Wilson and Gainsborough do not yield pre-eminence to Vernet, Zuccarelli, or any other of their contemporaries. Gainsborough added to the choice of all the fascinating scenery of familiar nature, the exquisite charm of facile execution; and he enriched his landscape with the most interesting groups of cottage-life. The poetic mind of Wilson adopted a more elevated style. Solemnity of composition, selection of form, and a tranquil richness of colouring, are among the attractions of his works, which called forth praises from the cotemporary foreign

artists above-mentioned. Besides these two great exemplars, Scott and Brooking (in shipping), Wright of Derby, Moore, Hodges, Barrett, Wheatley, and Morland (the two last also in picturesque and domestic scenery), have left behind them works which do honour to the English School, and which no school would blush to own.

Nor is the fame of our present day less equal to that of other nations. Every English Exhibition presents instances of just and skilful composition, of accurate design, of rich and harmonious colouring, in short, of a successful study of nature in all her varied forms, hues, and effects; and amongst the artists of this class, some are found to contest the palm with the celebrated of other ages.

In the particular species of execution also in water colours, in which modern art stands unrivalled, no pretensions are juster than those of England. In the Exhibition rooms of Somerset-house of late years, and in the separate collection of last year in another place, examples have been presented of
strength

strength and mellowness of effect, of richness of tint and fullness of colour, which yield little superiority to oil painting, and leave little farther to be desired.

Two names in this branch of art may be mentioned, which cannot be read without emotions of sensibility by the lovers of genius and art,—Cozens and Girtin. The former, in the comprehensive, essential seizure of his subjects, usually chosen from amidst the phænomena of nature's semblances; and the latter, in the almost magic expression of form and effect in the objects that surrounded him, alike lay claim to the most unlimited praise.

With these is to be recorded T. Sandby, excellent in architecture and landscape.

Happy were it for us, if we could with equal triumph remove the charge brought against us by other nations, of deficiency in historic painting. It cannot be denied that emulation, the great source of excellence, is less active in this than in the former departments (the cause of which has been

already assigned), and that works in the higher provinces of this class, do not constitute the prominent feature of our school.

The pencil of Sir James Thornhill first disclosed the steps of our returning art. The cupola of St. Paul's, and the ceiling of Greenwich Hospital, exhibited an ample display of composition, of well arranged and diversified groups; the Shipwreck, and the Conversion of St. Paul, cannot be slightly estimated in this respect; but he made no effort to enter on any forcible or high expression of mind; all is comprised in general forms. His talents are to be compared, *in kind*, to those of Pietro da Cortona, but the ceiling at Greenwich may fail of keeping its place, *in degree*, at the side of that of the Barberini, because the Roman painter, like the insect that forms the Device of his patron, had extracted more rich and various sweets from the fragrant garden in which he was nursed.

After Thornhill, we look in vain for specimens of *epic* art worthy of notice, almost until
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the period of the Royal Academy, since whose institution, amidst the zealous and frequently successful efforts of artists, have been witnessed the ineffectual struggles of historical painting to stem the tide of public neglect. The patronage of our gracious Sovereign has, indeed, in a single instance, given employment to historic art; and it is to the exertions made under that illustrious patronage that the fame of British painting owes much of its consequence in all parts of the Continent. Liberal signs of encouragement have also been shown by some public bodies, principally by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, &c. But all these unfortunately are, alike, insulated examples, all have failed of exciting emulation where it was chiefly to be expected,—unless the present be the long-desired, auspicious moment of their influence.

The historical efforts of Reynolds discover beautiful, but vague, combinations, and impressive, but desultory grandeur; these are

germs of historic talent which, had they been matured by an earlier disposition of the nation to the encouragement of the Arts, would, no doubt, have risen to a much higher degree of excellence; at the same time it would partake of infatuated partiality to assert, that the compositions or the conceptions of Reynolds would ever have equalled the Homeric poem of the Capella Sistina, or the no less Homeric drama of the Vatican.

In subjects of sportive fancy, his productions neither envy the past, nor fear a future age. In this province, and in domestic or familiar history, the native and characteristic powers of our English painters have been chiefly shewn. At the head of the latter class stands HOGARTH, a painter unequalled in the graphic Comedy, and Farce (if the term may be pardoned) of nature. His eulogy has been so often written, and lately so amply displayed by a learned and noble author, that it would be here superfluous; but it may be allowable to remark, that in
the

the conspicuous prominence of the intellectual and moral properties of his art, in the wit, humour, and patriotism of his scenes, his powers in other professional points have been chiefly overlooked. The picture of the *Boys playing on the Tombstone*, at the same time that it lays claim to some of the highest moral historic merits, is an instance of the most skilful, and it may be added, *grand* composition. In the series of *Marriage a la Mode*, several of the subjects are painted with a breadth, force, and clearness of colour, which have seldom been surpassed; the *Breakfast Table* is the most striking instance of these merits.

Immediately after this great painter, none are to be mentioned in his school, who are not eminently surpassed by the artists now living. In the Exhibitions of late years have been seen specimens of genuine humour, worthy to confirm our pre-eminence in a branch of historic art in which we have once stood so unquestionably without a rival. In com-

positions of familiar, serious moral, the present day affords also numerous instances of merit, which will not bow the crest to the interesting *naïf* pencil of Greuse, or of other foreign painters of the same class ; the examples of this kind are the most numerous of any in the class of history in our Exhibitions.

In these provinces, therefore, we have much to boast, and, in the class of higher history, the excellent but rare specimens which have been produced during an inferior state of encouragement, authorize a doubt whether our deficiency be not greater in number than in strength.

Few of our artists have devoted themselves exclusively to the practice of any class of historic painting ; the name of Mortimer is almost the only one in the records of past days ; far the greater number have conceded a large portion of their time and study to portraiture, with the success already mentioned ; they have seldom been able to divert the attention of opulence and rank to the
abstract

abstract beauties of their art, or the independent efforts which they themselves have made in it*.

The genius of Reynolds sometimes prevailed also in this difficult point; his *Ugolino*, his *Nativity*, his *Infant Hercules*, became subjects of attention to nobles and monarchs. The endeavours of most of our other painters have met a different fate. Their greatest exertions have been made in the various galleries which have in turn deservedly excited the attention of the people. One of these galleries was formed by the vigorous efforts of an individual artist, the others were derived from employment established on commercial specula-

* If circumstances did not so distinctly point out the causes of the slender growth of historic painting amongst us, I should be induced to hazard a conjecture, that the *peculiar* propensity to portraiture among English artists was, in some mode, connected with, and springing from, the national love and study of *humour*, which must be too evidently of assistance in portraiture, to need a remark, and much less an argument.

tions, certainly not favourable to the severer process of art. The merits of these galleries are now appreciated by the public, and their result has been already noticed.

It is lamentable to reflect, that the circumstance which has of late chiefly contributed to the support of the historic artists, should, at the same time, have conducted to the depression of the historic art, viz. the employment afforded by the zeal and bounty of the printsellers. This is the natural refuge of painters when unpatronized by the great in rank, or greater public authority; and, as Goldsmith has observed respecting booksellers and authors, “there cannot be, “perhaps, imagined a combination more “prejudicial to taste than this.” The principal object in view is, for the most part, the production of such works as (when engraved) will make a competent appearance in a periodical publication, or a new edition of a favourite author, to supply the ordinary demands of the metropolis, or the larger market of the Continent. “In “these

“ these circumstances,” says the same writer,
 “ the author bids adieu to fame, and writes
 “ for bread ; and for that only imagination
 “ is seldom called in*.”

Yet it must be confessed that even under this humiliating veil of national art, its deportment not unfrequently betrays its exalted birth. How often, in the most trifling of these compositions, are we surprised by the dawnings of grace in outline and composition, the boldness of effect, the accuracy of form, the truth of expression ! qualities, of power to withdraw and detain the eye of the reader from the verse he loves, and sometimes to contest with the poet the wreath of intellectual triumph ! qualities worthy of nobler patronage !

To the printsellers and booksellers, however, the art of painting will perhaps, in a great measure, owe its future eminence. They first seem to have discovered the cravings of the public spirit in this respect ;

* Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning.

and

and have justly furnished hopes that a brighter æra is approaching; but what patron in a higher station of life in this immensely opulent nation, what individual, rich or great, has dared to vie with a print-seller! BOYDELL, MACKLIN, BOWYER, these are the only names which exact the tribute of gratitude from the modern class of historic artists in England*. Nay, it may almost be asked what single work of an historic nature has been painted for any other patron? If there be exceptions, as no doubt there are, they are yet so few as to amount, in the general scale of the question, to little more than nothing. For him, the enlightened, the liberal-minded Mæcenas,

* Mr. Josiah Boydell, the co-partner of the undertakings of the late patriotic Alderman, has proposed a judicious and liberal scheme for the encouragement of the Arts, on a commercial basis. Such comprehensive schemes of encouragement are by no means included under the remarks which have just been made, but may be regarded as in the highest degree deserving of public favour.

who

who shall arise to open this new path of national triumph, who shall vow the first temple to the permanency of the arts in his country,

BONIS ARTIBUS MANENTIBUS

for him a place is prepared in the gallery of English fame, for him a wreath is already wove by the consent of every muse*.

It is next to wonderful, that an ambitious design of this kind should not sooner have

* It would be an unjust neglect on this occasion, not to mention two names well deserving the regard of artists; those of Mr. Bernard, governor of the Foundling, and Mr. Hardman, of Manchester.

Mr. Bernard possesses a collection which consists chiefly (or entirely) of the works of modern English artists. This gentleman, whose life is a series of active benevolence, is said to have annually set apart, during many years past, for the purchase of works of his own countrymen, such a sum as he esteemed proportionate to his station and wealth.

Mr. Hardman has also formed a collection of pictures by modern artists. I believe these are the only collectors of this kind, but I sincerely hope they are not.

suggested

suggested itself; that amidst the expensive collections of use and ornament, of ores, of flowers, of fossils, grasses, and butterflies, while the material products of our land are carefully and scientifically arranged, one collection of its mental stores should be deemed unworthy of regard.

It is with pleasure that the writer of these pages again finds himself called on to advert to the recent and yet infant establishment of the BRITISH INSTITUTION. The benevolence and bounty which have graced its birth, will continue to diffuse their cheering influence over the labours of the artist, and will find in his gratitude their best reward. It is ardently to be wished by every lover of his country's fame (and it is little to be doubted), that so zealous a patronage may not dissipate its strength in the gratifying emotions of momentary beneficence, but may be solidly concentrated in some plan which will extend and perpetuate its operations, so as to render them effective of the continual advance of the Arts towards their highest glories; every
mode

mode of progress is within the power of such a combination of rank and wealth. It is not to be expected that the attention requisite to so arduous a project can equally be paid by all, but it may be reasonably looked for among those enlightened and amiable men, who combine the ardour of pursuit with the relish of intellectual pleasure, and may properly be said to cultivate the *taste* of science and social virtue.

Nor does it appear from the statement which has been given, that the high encouragement so much desired, would at the present moment be improperly conferred. It is a melancholy satisfaction to remark, that the Arts in this country are as high in power and pretension as in any other part of the globe*. The Plastic Art, if it be indeed expiring, may boast the *dignity* of

* Some modern artists at Rome are mentioned with considerable praise by Kotzebue, in his late *Travels through Italy*. The subjects of their pencils are chiefly of the *heroic* kind.

drawing

drawing in with its last breath the air of every region and climate. In the breast, however, of the ardent lover of his native soil, far different hopes will open their blossoms; he will forebode to Britain the renewal of those important honours which the Arts have formerly brought on nations; of those moral benefits which have been derived from them; he will build his confidence on the slow but sure genius of his country, whose energies, not easily roused, rest only in victory.

It does not appear requisite to notice the subordinate divisions of Painting into Crayon, Miniature, and Enamel, in which the various degrees of national ability are generally proportionate to the state of the higher provinces of art.

Sculpture.

In the examination of the other branch of the Plastic Art, Sculpture, it will probably strike the reader with surprise, when he shall be

be told that almost until the present day, until the cotemporaries of Wilton, Bacon, and Banks, England has not been able to boast a single native sculptor of eminence since the æra of the Reformation. Previous to that time there are to be found many English names in this department of art; a circumstance which corroborates the statement already given of the causes of our national deficiency in this respect.

The fanaticism of 1648 renewed the devastation which the Reformation had first authorized. At the return of royalty, although the arts returned not, artists flocked in crowds to the court of unceasing gaiety, profusion, and luxury. The strength of the *native* artist was still drooping under the fatal anathemas of reform; the inability which prohibitory laws and penalties had induced, became a ground of reproach, and a successive train of foreigners obtained an easy triumph. Cibber, Gibbons, Scheemaker, Rysbrach, Bertocini, and Roubillac, occupied in turn the post of superior talent. All
[these

these have left behind them works of ingenious labour, of which some may justly be considered ornamental to our country, but it was not to be expected that the Arts should rise to the highest honours during the *exclusive* employment of foreigners, or that they should be directed to exalted uses by men who had no other interest in their success than as they procured the passing favour of employers in a strange land. The Arts will never ascend to noble purposes, will never put forth the great uses of which they are capable, unless guided by PATRIOTISM. It is that vital principle, that concentrate sentiment of public achievement, which alone can elevate, inspire, immortalize.

BANKS was among those who most zealously sought the enlargement of professional knowledge in the stores of Rome. A mind ardently roused to competition with the works of excellence which he beheld, and a hand trained from infancy to a ready expression of his conceptions, imparted to
his

his productions an air of ancient art. He gave to his *Cupid* the softness of characteristic form, and spirit and manly energy to his *Caractacus*. But he returned to a country not yet capable of feeling his worth; the statue of Cupid which he brought home in 1779, found no purchaser, and he was induced, in 1781, to carry it to St. Petersburg, where it was bought by the Empress Catharine, and placed in the gardens of Czarsco-zelo. Banks did not remain at Rome late enough to witness the rising glories of Canova, the only sculptor who could then have contested the palm with him in Italy.

BACON's genius was of native growth; he traversed no distant regions for improvement of his art, but drew from the researches of others sufficient food for an active and ready fancy. His conceptions were quick and sparkling, his execution polished, and his whole work characteristically graceful. A *Britannia* brandishing her thunderbolt,
and

and an *infant Orphan** imploring shelter for his shuddering frame, are alike the productions of graceful and tender feelings.

The genius of WILTON, not less cultivated by study, was of inferior energy to that of Bacon or Banks.

To this slight memorial of departed talents, must be added another name which calls forth the regrets of those who wish the advance of the Arts,

“ And in a PROCTER’s fate, a Phidias mourn †.”

To the unwearied studies of the artists just mentioned, and of others now living, whose names will, at a future period, do equal honour to the history of our country, is to be attributed the revival of sculpture in England. The custom of visiting Italy, the

* The figure of a *destitute child* asking protection from *Charity*, was first executed for the Marine Society, and afterwards copied for the Bloomsbury School: the work is every way worthy of immortality.

† Rhymes on Art. Mr. Shee’s note on this passage furnishes an additional argument for the watchful care of patronage.

once peaceful Elysium of the Arts, has stored the minds of the students with intellectual treasures. From that source have flowed the purer conceptions which our sculpture has of late displayed. A competition with the fine forms and beautiful outlines of the antique statues has banished the vitiated taste of Puget's and Bernini's school, which had so long and undisputedly flourished under the foreigners before enumerated; and our Exhibitions have afforded examples of a pure and correct style.

The vote passed in 1798 by the House of Commons, for the erection of sepulchral monuments to the heroes who had died in the defence of their country, although it did not primarily spring from a regard for the Arts, afforded to the sculptors a happy opportunity of doing honour to themselves and to England*. The monuments erected
in

* In consideration merely of the advantage to be derived to the Arts, it were here again to be wished, that the respective execution of each monument had been
allotted

in the two cathedrals of the metropolis, to the memory of various officers of our navy and army, will stand as records of the sudden elevation of sculpture at the present period.

And may not this instance of talents thus honourably called forth by accidental patronage in one department, naturally entitle us to analogous presumption in respect of the other classes of art? May it not justify the supposition, that while the Exhibitions

allotted to the sculptors by the judgment of their fellow-artists. Every other interference is in danger of being prejudicial to the result of their efforts. So judicious in this instance is the sentence of Pliny, "*De pictore, sculptore, fictore, nisi artifex judicare non potest.*"

Critics, unacquainted with practice, are, in every art, apt to persuade themselves, that they could direct the artist to the execution of such works as would be more proper for his peculiar talents, and more creditable to his reputation, than those which he chooses for himself: they judge, therefore, by their opinions or prejudices derived from extraneous sources; but a jury of artists would judge by their knowledge, not only of the art, but of the power of execution actually possessed by the artist concerned.

of

of every year demonstrate various talents inadequately exerted, and genius stooping its powers to custom, or sacrificing them to casual employment, the shackles which a nation forbears to loose, are worn by hands worthy of superior toil?

In the peculiar branch of *Sculpture* of *Gems*, English skill is likewise of very modern date.

In medals, or engraving in steel, the name of Thomas Simons is justly conspicuous during the time of Charles I. the Commonwealth, and part of the reign of Charles II. This artist excepted, far the greater praise has been due to foreigners, who have resided among us, such as Tanner (by whom is a head of Milton), Dassier, Nattier (excellent also in *Gems*), and, in a later period, Droz, &c.

In the present reign, Kirk has left works (both in steel and stone), of considerable merit; but our coins have long been, and still are, inadequate to the just expectations of Art.

Our present day boasts of art in Gem-Sculpture, that vies with the greatest merits of Pichler, or Andrieu, in their respective works.

Architecture.

Although the consideration of the national importance of Architecture has not been made a part of the principal subject of the foregoing chapters, yet in a general view of the present state of the Arts in England, it cannot fail to demand an equal attention.

The productions of Architecture are necessarily more obvious to general observation than those of the two former branches of art, but its progress is more difficult to be ascertained, on account of its multifarious operations, and of the great number of undefined degrees which it is capable of admitting both in works and artificers. The leading features by which it is to be distinguished in our country are few; the nature of our state, with regard to its financial regulations, renders the construction of great public edifices
very

very rare in England. Projects are often discussed, and long deferred. Plans of a Residence for our Sovereign, and of a Senate-house for our Parliament, have been by turns proposed and neglected; new churches, and new mansions of our nobility, have been sufficiently numerous; but amongst our recent buildings nothing is yet to be seen resembling the “solemn temple,” or “the gorgeous palace.”

Notwithstanding, however, this general statement, the architects of England, since the days of Sir Christopher Wren, have constructed the PUBLIC EDIFICES of *Blenheim*, the *Bridges of Westminster* and *Blackfriars*, the *Bank*, the *India-House*, *Newgate*, *Somerset-House*, the *Pantheon*, and the *Theatres*; all of them works of considerable importance, even in comparison with other nations.

No one of the fine arts is more especially under the dominion of the artist's employer than Architecture. The painter or the sculptor may venture to execute a single work of art without total despair of indemnification for his labour; but palaces and

temples can only be built at the public risk, and, with whatever treasures the mind be fraught, the hand of the architect is chained, unless the state demand the advantage of his skill.

From no less distant a period than from the time of Inigo Jones, who may be said to have brought Palladio into England, there subsisted among us an unceasing, but inferior, imitation of the Italian modes of building. Devotion to this species of Architecture was so great, and so deeply rooted, that every deviation from its standard was thought a trespass against Common Sense. “Were
“ a modern architect,” says Hogarth, “to
“ build a palace in Lapland, or the West
“ Indies, Palladio must be his guide, nor
“ would he dare to stir a step without his
“ book.”

The Italian modes of building were unfortunately ill adapted to our climate: the unremitting glare of Italian suns required precautions which our milder sky does not make necessary; and the oppressive fervour of an Italian summer dictated the refuge of
secluded

secluded apartments which our softer atmosphere induces us to avoid, and which the moisture of an insular situation renders dangerous. Nor were those modes unfrequently employed to the annoyance of the actual inhabitants of such houses as were erected under the influence of this prejudice; ponderous cornices threatened, each moment, destruction to the banquet and the bed, and clumsy mouldings, round the doors and windows, occupied the spaces most important to grace and comfort.

From this slavery of taste we have been emancipated by a fortunate revolution in the art, which has gradually taken place within the course of the last fifty years, during which the British nation has enjoyed the glory of having rescued from impending oblivion the invaluable remains of Grecian Architecture.

The labours of Stuart and Revett* gave,

* To whom Stuart was principally indebted for the accuracy of his measurements.

not only to their own country, but to the whole world, correct measurements and delineations of the existing monuments of Greece. Le Roy, a French architect of no mean desert, visited that country about the same time, but the merits, not only of greater energy of study and investigation, but of greater accuracy also, rest on this occasion with the English artists. From the period of those communications the adoption of the beautiful mouldings of Athens began to take place of dull, cumbrous, monotonous projections; and the tasteful apartments and edifices constructed by the Adams, completed an universal change from heavy insipidity to grace and elegance.

Stuart, possessing some learning and considerable general information in the arts, judiciously forbore to attempt any deviation in style from the models he had brought home; his plans and designs were such as he had seen exemplified in Greece, and such as he justly conceived worthy of imitation.

The mind of Robert Adam was more aspiring.

aspiring. Having studied his art in Italy, and bringing home with him a great store of drawings of all that Italy could furnish to the eye of an architect, he introduced a style of decoration, which was chiefly derived from the antique Baths and the Loggie of Raffaele in the Vatican, but which his natural strength of capacity, incorporating with its individual powers the taste displayed in those works, had rendered distinctly his own.

Something of a similar kind had been previously attempted by Kent, an artist of great celebrity, under the patronage of the Earl of Burlington, in the reign of George II. but the attempt was at best but feebly executed.

Besides this new rise of taste, and the beauty of the ornamental parts introduced by these various artists, nothing is more remarkable in the progress of Architecture in this latter period, than the great and general diffusion of good sense, elegance, and convenience in our dwellings; a source

of comforts of which every one is sensible from daily experience.

Taste, however, unchecked by the existence of any great standards of art in this country, deviates hourly into numberless eccentric paths, and our modes of building are now nearly as various as the humours of our minds.

The reader will not be displeased to see, on this occasion, the following extracts from the remarks of one of the most eminent architects of our time:

“ The advance of the sister arts of Paint-
“ ing and Sculpture, have a great influence
“ over that of Architecture. The grace of
“ form and proportion can but little be ex-
“ pected from the mere use of the rule and
“ compass. Architecture arrived at its per-
“ fection when Painting and Sculpture, at
“ Athens, were in all their glory, and the
“ ardent pursuit of those delightful arts in
“ this country, at the present moment, will
“ probably influence and refine the taste
“ of our architects.

“ For

“ For a great number of years this art
 “ has been exercised under the dominion
 “ of a sort of bigotry to what has been blindly
 “ denominated the rules of Architecture.
 “ It would be difficult to shew in what these
 “ rules consist, independently of those
 “ proportions of the ORDERS OF COLUMNS
 “ which have been laid down by different
 “ Italian masters, but in which none of them
 “ agree. It may, however, be observed,
 “ that the silent acquiescence in these un-
 “ defined rules had the effect of preventing,
 “ in some measure, that mischief which
 “ might be expected to arise from the un-
 “ governed whims of unskilful professors.
 “ Danger may also justly be feared from
 “ the present almost licentious practice
 “ which is to be observed in some of our
 “ recent works, to say nothing of the grow-
 “ ing fashion which induces our noblemen
 “ and gentry to fortify themselves in Castles,
 “ or to retire into the gloomy apartments of
 “ Gothic Abbeys of their own construc-
 “ tion.

“ Considerable powers of mind are un-
“ questionably requisite in the higher de-
“ partments of this art, not to mention the
“ deep knowledge of mechanics required
“ occasionally by the great architect. But
“ although its principal object involve the
“ highest efforts of imagination and inven-
“ tion, it seems to have been the invariable
“ doctrine inculcated universally throughout
“ Europe, almost ever since the revival of
“ the arts in Italy, that the architect was
“ to give himself up to implicit imitation.
“ The result has been, that a few modes
“ have been adopted, and, like sheep, all
“ have followed in the same track. Look
“ at the Italians since the fifteenth century,
“ and behold the result of this acquiescence
“ in fashion, among the innumerable build-
“ ings of Italy! A monotonous imitation of
“ these, a little better or a little worse, has
“ filled Europe with samples out of the
“ same work-shop. This art, which is
“ capable of giving full exercise to the
“ most extensive faculties of the mind, has
“ hitherto

“ hitherto laboured under the same sort of
 “ predominant influence as that which re-
 “ gulates the modes of design and work-
 “ manship in the most ordinary parts of our
 “ dress.

“ The great scope afforded to the inven-
 “ tive faculty by this art, therefore, has
 “ hitherto been of but little avail. From
 “ the time of its exercise amongst the
 “ Greeks to the present period, a favourite
 “ mode once adopted has been followed im-
 “ plicitly without peculiar adaptation. The
 “ Greek temple, for its purpose, was per-
 “ haps as near to perfection as human art
 “ can hope to arrive; but what are we to
 “ think of the nature of this art, when
 “ we see the most appropriate emblems of
 “ Pagan rites transferred, in such a country
 “ as this, to buildings of a different or even
 “ opposite import*?

“ It

* I profess myself strongly impressed with the justness of these remarks. I have never been able to conceive why the flower which suggested a form for the capital

“ It is not by servilely imitating mould-
“ ings, or the ornaments of antiquity, merely
“ because they are antique, that works can
“ be produced which will endure the criti-
“ cism, or obtain the approbation, of poste-
“ rity. There is in all works of Taste a
“ ground of invariable good sense, without
“ which, though paltry productions may
“ endure an ephemeridal period, they will
“ quickly sink to their true level, and be lost
“ in the great gulph of *things of no value*.”

Besides the artists who have been mentioned as the chief improvers of English taste, the most eminent architects (from Sir C. Wren to those now living), have been Sir J. Vanbrugh, the Earl of Burlington; Gibbs, Isaac Ware, and Sir William Chambers.

of a column in Greece, should be thought indispensably applicable to the same use in Italy, France, and England. Are there no appropriate ornaments of each country? would the blended oak-leaf and acorn form less beautiful masses to crown our columns than the foliage of an acanthus?

The

The respective merits of all these are well known. Of the *first*, only, so often unjustly depreciated, it may be proper to say, that his powerful and comprehensive mind was well calculated to give birth to great nobleness of general effect in his public edifices, but they were loaded with heavy *parts*, and this defect soon attracted the notice of criticism, exposed him to the shafts of sarcastic wit, and fixed on his works a reputation, which, for a long time, superseded in the mind of the public the sense of their real value.

Of the *last*, Somerset-House is the most conspicuous work.

In the space of the last thirty years, the number of professors of this art in Great Britain has increased tenfold. Many students have prosecuted their studies in Italy; and from the additional means of improvement furnished by the Royal Academy, a clearer road has been open to genius,

“ And emulation hath a thousand sons

“ That, one by one, pursue.”

In

In a view of national competition, it is to be regretted that the education of architects in England is inferior to that which they receive in other countries ; it is less regular, less scientific, than in France. Nor is the public attention to forward the advancement of the art and to correct its abuses, in any measure equal to that which the Spanish government at present pays to the regulation of its powers, and the adaptation of them to general utility.

Yet such has been the persevering industry and emulation of individuals, that from the specimens of skill and knowledge daily exhibited amongst us, there is every reason to believe the architects of this country equal to the construction of buildings that would do honour to any time or nation.

To this general statement of English Art, it remains to add a few words respecting Engraving, evidently influenced in the highest degree by the state of Painting and
Sculpture,

Sculpture, and influencing in its turn the celebrity of either art.

Engraving.

From the period of the Restoration, England has given birth to Faithorne, Gaywood, Place, and White, and, for our greater honour, to BARLOW and VERTUE. Barlow, indeed, can hardly be considered under the especial head of Engraving; his works are the productions of genius of a general description, replete with various expressions of nature, and with rich effect. He was chiefly excellent in the delineation of animals, in which, although less correct in outline and form than Rydinger and some others in that branch of art, he far surpassed them in expressing the distinctive character of each particular species of animal.

Vertue succeeded to White, and contributed to raise the honour of an art which he practised with eminent success. Richness of ornament, variety and discrimination of surface, delicacy of execution, and ingenuity

nuity of invention, are among the characteristic powers of Vertue.

With his name may be united those of Pine and Pond; but notwithstanding the merits of these various professors, the art, soon after the period of their works, sunk to so low a state of estimation; and so rapid has, since, been the return and rise of Engraving in the present reign, that, about the time of the birth of our gracious Sovereign, this art may be said to have been born again to England.

The first engravers of distinguished merit in this latter period, were Strange, in history and portrait, and Woollett in figures and landscape; both acquired the rudiments of their art under the tuition of masters of very inferior abilities. Strange afterwards visited France, where Engraving was in a much higher state than among us.

Wille, Aliamet, Beauverlet, Lempereure, and others of lesser public name, were incontestably the best engravers of that time. The first of these was deservedly celebrated
for

for the peculiar beauty of his *line*, and brilliancy of his *graving*. He is allowed by professional judgment to have carried the manual art of Engraving to a point of excellence in which he is scarcely in danger of being at any time surpassed. With this eminent artist, Woollett entered into a correspondence, which promoted the mutual introduction of their works into each kingdom.

It is a singular circumstance, that the two English artists who have been mentioned, raised at once the fame of this country to a level with that of any other. The *Venus attired by the Graces*, from Guido, and the *Niobe*, from Wilson, were the first of their productions that attracted the notice of the public, and it is questionable whether they may not still be counted among the most deserving of public admiration; Woollett's reputation, however, lost nothing of its lustre by his exquisite productions from the celebrated pictures of the Death of Wolfe, and the

the Battle off La Hogue, works whose high value is known in every part of Europe.

The softness given to the flesh by Strange, and the appropriate expression of different substances by the graver of Woollett, may be regarded as standards of excellence in their respective kinds.

The great merits of the Florentine, Bartolozzi, so long resident, and so justly famous, with us, did not eclipse the names of these our native artists; but it would be ingratitude to his labours to omit remarking, that, besides the emulation inspired by his accomplished talents, this country is in no little degree indebted to him for the general improvement of taste in various departments of his art. The Diploma of the Royal Academicians, from a design by Cipriani, is one of his finest works; the portraits of Lord Thurlow and Lord Mansfield, from Reynolds, are examples of the highest delicacy of workmanship. His engravings of ornamental designs, emblematic embellishments, and other similar parts
of

of art, imparted a superior value to works of that kind.

Vivaret also, at the same time, contributed to the advancement of the art in landscape.

To these is to be added the name of Ryland; who, the first in our country, became eminent in *chalk*, or *dotting* Engraving, an art of which, however, he was not the inventor, having acquired it in the school of Paris (where Desmarteau had carried it to a considerable degree of excellence), but which he practised with some variation from the French method.

Rooker also deserves to be here noticed, on account of the high merit of his architectural engravings, in which he derived much improvement from the works published by Piranesi at Rome.

It reflects no small credit on the artists who have been mentioned, and on other engravers now living, that their successful rivalry with talents of allowed eminence, was
able

able to turn the tide and profits of importation from France to their own country. By their strenuous pursuit of excellence in their works, the reputation of English Engraving became so universally established, that, instead of an annual sum, amounting from fifty to a hundred thousand pounds, paid till their time by English purchasers for French Engravings, the balance was in a few years found to be, to a much larger amount, in favour of England; in which state it continued for a considerable period. The causes of its present decline are well worth the investigation of the public.

The merits of our Engravers, certainly, are not fallen into inferior estimation. Their talents, on the contrary, like those exercised in other provinces of the arts, are adequate to much higher efforts than opportunity calls forth.

Of their rivals on the Continent, Bervic in France, and Morghan in Italy, are the most conspicuous: the former is known here by a much admired print of the late King of France.

France. The latter adds to the studied correctness of his master, Volpato, a considerable resemblance of the peculiar merits of Strange; his execution is more laboriously finished than that of either. But even in the view of these justly eminent artists, England, in the present moment, has no cause to fear the test of comparison. Some instances of the works of our living engravers, and particularly in portrait, might easily be adduced, fit to contend with the highest fame of any nation.

The foreign schools of Engraving are, in general, more remarkable for the correctness of drawing (and for what is by engravers called *touch*) in their works, and the English for the breadth of light and shadow. One distinguishing feature of English Engraving is peculiarly deserving of notice: our artists have adopted a mode of expressing the local colours of objects represented in painting*, (chiefly by the proportionate degrees to which the lights are brought in the respective objects).

The

* This distinction is carried to so nice a point, that a skilful

The advantages obtained in *effect* by this method are easily to be conceived, as it evidently increases the approach of the engraver's art to the original achievement of the painter. It is not less remarkable, that this advance in art, the invention of our artists, and invariably exhibited in their works, should remain, to this day, the practice of the English school alone.

Two other branches of Engraving, *Mezzotinto*, and *Aquatinto*, are also peculiarly cultivated in England. The former was brought hither by Prince Rupert in the time of Charles II. and communicated by him to Mr. Evelyn in the year 1660, from whom others of our countrymen also acquired the principles of an art which they have since carried to a rare degree of excellence. The numerous examples every day presented to public view, require no explanation of their merit.

skillful engraver is nearly able to ascertain in an English print, what is the colour of each separate object, as in draperies, whether they be yellow, blue, red, &c. &c.

The

Among the most able professors in this branch, previous to those of the present moment, have been G. White, Smith, Fisher, Luttrell, Mac Ardell, Dixon, and the Watsons.

Aquatinto, of recent invention, and introduced into England by a living artist, has also been brought to its present state of improvement in this country.

Such, briefly summed, is the state of the Arts of Design in England*, at a moment when they are declared to be in danger of perishing for ever. They stand therefore on the brink of splendour or annihilation ; they plead before a profoundly reflecting nation ; they demand a trial.

* In this general statement of the arts, the reader will perceive many omissions, which perhaps he will not always be disposed to pardon. The names of Wootton, Cotes, ROMNEY, Hall, and some others, may well be thought to deserve a place in the account of modern English art. The reader will easily allot to them their proper classes.

CONCLUSION.

THE admirable author of the "In-
 " quiry into the present State of Polite
 " Learning," has remarked in the con-
 cluding chapter of that work, that " every
 " subject acquires an adventitious import-
 " ance to him who considers it with appli-
 " cation. He finds it more intimately con-
 " nected with human happiness than the
 " rest of mankind are apt to allow ; he sees
 " consequences resulting from it which do
 " not strike others with equal conviction ;
 " and, still pursuing speculation beyond
 " the bounds of reason, too frequently be-
 " comes ridiculously earnest in trifles or
 " absurdity."

The

The influence thus described has been occasionally felt by the writer of these pages, in the course of his reflections on a favourite Art. Sometimes, wrapt in admiration of its faculties, he has regarded it as a gift of such superior wonder, as to appear a perpetual remembrancer (at however awfully infinite a distance) of the act of creative power. At one moment he has asked, whence can it proceed, but from superior interest obtained in the minds of men, that, among the distinctive *series of lives*, which have been the theme of grave and polished writers, at the side of kings, conquerors, and philosophers, stand, in so distinguished a degree, those of the *poets* and the *painters*? At another, crowns, conquests, and poems, have sunk in comparative estimation, and he has been ready to exclaim with Euripides,

“ Πρῶτον μὲν Εἶδος ἄξιον τυραννίδος.”

First worthy, FORM! to reign——

But of what kind soever may have been the

N

momen-

momentary enthusiasm of his thoughts, he has diligently endeavoured to confine his pen to the expression of more temperate sentiments, to such sentiments as may reasonably hope to meet the impartial judgments of those, in whose hands are placed the destinies of the Arts. He has ranked the Plastic in the general class of the liberal Arts, and the inference he has assumed is, that they claim an equal share of cultivation with other Arts of that class, in the public institutions of liberal education.

The reader will, therefore, recollect without surprise, the regret that has been expressed at the total separation which, in this respect, subsists between the Arts of Design and the other Arts and Sciences.

The causes of the general depression of the Arts of Design, have been sufficiently shewn in Mr. Barry's account of the effects produced on them by the spirit of reformation, in the reign of Elizabeth.

Under Charles I. they revived; were again beaten down by the revolutionists who succeeded

ceeded that elegant and accomplished monarch; and, as if stunned with this second blow, they remained languid and prostrate until the present reign,

“ Confounded, tho’ immortal.”

Never did any art, in any country, strive so long against persecution and neglect. Neither prohibition, nor the coldness of public regard, could wholly extinguish their fires; those fires which even now struggle in the bosoms of our living artists, and prepare the splendours of our future triumph.

Whatever be the shades of national variation in the English climate, genius, or character, the experience of ages has shewn that on the genius of existing governments depends the state of the Plastic Arts; and on that, in England, likewise must depend their final establishment or failure.

Oh! never may it be said, oh! never may the awful record be wafted along the stream of ages, that, while sparks of individual lustre broke forth beneath the stroke of accident, sufficient to ascertain intrinsic

value, the hand of power disdained or neglected to polish the precious ore ! Let it not cloud our fame, that, in the most distinguished period of our greatness, one source of those refinements of mind, of those enjoyments of intellect, from which spring the solaces, the virtuous ornaments, and delights of life, was devoid of interest, was thought unworthy of regard ! Save us from portentous darkness, propitious Heaven ! let us be enabled to try each lance of national intellect in open combat !

“ If we must perish, we thy will obey ;

“ But let us perish IN THE FACE OF DAY ! ”

A calm and unbiassed attention can alone determine the real value of the object of this Inquiry. England requires no incentive to generous zeal. The consideration of social good is alone sufficient at all times to call forth her highest exertions. It is not by exaggerated argument, that the attention of English minds is to be interested. In the
hour

hour of tranquil reflection, after a just, and (of course) a full discussion of their merits and their claims, lie the hopes of the ENGLISH ARTS.

But were it possible that any stimulus could be wanting from external causes, would not such be found in the splendid earnestness of other great states at the present moment, to foster and exalt the Arts?

It is to be diligently born in mind, that no moderate degree of emulation can give us a superiority over the efforts of surrounding governments. Other great establishments of the Arts in Europe, are hitherto on a more enlarged scale than our own; the national employment of artists more conspicuous than amongst us. But, *degrees* of competition may at last be questionable; we can rise to *decided pre-eminence* in this intellectual pretension, only by being the first in the solemn restoration of the ARTS of DESIGN to the illustrious purposes they have, once in the world, achieved; by
the

the public authorized direction of their powers to utility and social civilization; by the dedication of them to national virtue and glory.

THE END.

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